CBW

Number One
For PSV Professionals

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1st with the news Now every Wednesday

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Less Bucks, More Fizz

The probus from BMC

The BMC Probus 850 offers unbeatable value for money in the 35 seat midi luxury coach sector. It has the performance and economy you would expect from a Cummins ISBe 220 hp engine and ZF (manual or auto) gearbox but standard features that might surprise you given the list price.

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Standard Specification

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Disc brakes all round, ABS/ASR
Meritor axles
Air-conditioning
TV/DVD/Stereo system
Carpet and Curtains
4.9m3 of luggage space
35 seats
Power plug door
Cool box
Telma Retarder

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CBW

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Driving forward – or not...

The Driving Standards Agency, GoSkills and the legislators are going to have to move up a gear to meet the timetable set for Europe's driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

By autumn 2008, the EU wants to see the first of the UK's new recruits ready to sit four hours of theory testing and two hours of practical tests to gain the new qualification. And by then, existing drivers will have to be well on the way to their 35 hours of training.

I have to say that in selecting Option 2 - which asks for tests rather than lengthy training - the industry may have missed a trick. Though Option 1's 280 hours of training may have seemed a big ask, I suspect that from an employee perspective, most would rather have had training than exams.

The debate was always going to be led by the haulage industry - which has the bigger numbers problem to solve - but that's not to say that the bus and coach industry wasn't of a like mind. Given the proposition, the outcome isn't going to shut the industry down altogether, which it might have had the consultation not spotted the bear traps.

The response from operators was pretty pathetic, on a quantitative analysis; the combined HGV and PCV industry and trade associations could generate just 90 responses between them which, given the several thousand operators who will be directly affected, isn't all that impressive.

Let's hope the outcome is more positive. Any operator with some decent offices and a bit of organisation should now be thinking not only how it will meet the training needs of its own drivers, but the training needs of the local area. There's going to be a big shortfall in training in two years, and anyone with some nous could not only solve their own situation before it becomes a crisis but locate a new income stream.

Mark Williams

Mark Williams
Editor

Coach and Bus Week is a supporter of the following organisations:

COACH TOURISM COUNCIL
Promoting Travel and Tourism by Coach

ABC

British Travel Trade Fair
1-2 March 2006
NEC, Birmingham

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Blair wades into concessions row

Prime Minister to discuss funding problems with MPs

Andrew Peace, news editor

The government has admitted that there are serious issues over the funding for the Concessionary Travel scheme. Just a week before the scheme is introduced on April 1, Prime Minister Tony Blair will meet with a group of MPs to discuss the matter.

In his monthly press conference last week, Tony Blair was questioned directly about the introduction of the scheme and specifically about the situation in Tyne & Wear, where Nexus faces a £5.4 million shortfall in funding, and is cutting other services to compensate. He said: "Obviously we want to give the pensioners their free bus travel, but on the other hand there is a financial obligation and we have to make sure that the money is properly distributed. We are looking at it urgently, I think that is the most that I can say."

Reports in the local press in the North East say that a group of MPs, lead by Nick Brown and David Clelland - both MPs in Tyne & Wear - were due to meet the Prime Minister early this week. The Prime Minister's spokesperson denied knowledge of a meeting, but another high-level source confirmed that the meeting was to take place as *CBW* went to press on Monday.

Tony Blair, Czech social-democratic Premier Jiri Paroubek, left, and acting CSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party) chairman Bohuslav Sobotka pose in front of a London double-decker after it was unveiled in Prague Friday, March 10. The Labour Party donated the London bus to the Czech social democrats to be used in their campaign before the general election held on June 2-3. Blair attended a meeting of European social democrat and socialist leaders in the Czech capital.
(AP Photo/CTK, Michal Kamaryt)

David Clelland was quoted as saying: "We want the Prime Minister to find a way through the log-jam. Ministers recognise there is a genuine problem, but are unable to find a way around it. We need the PM to find a way. I remain hopeful this will be resolved."

Rumours in the national press over the weekend suggest the government is considering centralizing the administration of the scheme, rather than giving the money to local authorities to distribute, and that 34 out of around 150 local authorities had CT funding shortfalls.

Although admitting that there were "teething problems" with the Concessionary Fares scheme, a spokesman for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister told *CBW* that there were no plans for any changes to the way the scheme is funded. When asked for an update on the situation he said: "There is lots of noise being made in the North East, but as to any update there isn't one, nothing has actually happened."

He added that ministers are still looking at ways to address the issues but had not come up with a solution as yet. He was unable to confirm - or deny - the number of authorities having funding problems. Adding that the problem with distributing money directly to bus companies was that the system would be open to abuse and that "there has got to be some way of protecting the tax payer."

Cost of criminal assault could cripple industry

Government proposals to make employers liable for all workplace assaults could be costly enough to put some operators out of business.

A little-known consultation paper which closed for responses on March 1 proposes to virtually end the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS) for attacks on office and driving staff and place the onus on the employer to pay.

Unlike the CICS, which has capped rates, claims against employers could potentially be unlimited under the new proposals. Changes to the Act, said one lawyer, mean that CICS would not even apply until an employee had taken a civil claim against the employer.

The changes, if made, could see the need for assault screens on all buses and coaches for operators unable to find the cost of swingeing insurances, and at the very least massive costs which will have to be passed on to passengers.

Peter Shipp, chairman of East Yorkshire Motor Services, says the impact on coach businesses may have been underestimated.

He said: "The potential for huge cost increases and massive price rises in employers' liability insurance is very clear for businesses with front-line staff, especially in the travel business."

Mr Shipp said the issue was first raised when changes were proposed in February 2004: "I understood that the proposal had later been dropped. During the last few days, I have found it is still about.

"It looks like another potential disaster for the bus and coach industry."

BREAKING NEWS

The European Commission is to examine a complaint made by private bus and coach operators against the Irish Government.

The Coach Transport and Tourism Council (CTTC) claims unfair state aid is being given to state owned CIÉ, the holding company of Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus.

Private bus companies have been lobbying to get a bigger slice of the market to provide public services but there has been significant debate regarding how much of the market they should have access to. Unions have opposed a significant increase in commercial involvement, but the private firms say it is unfair that CIÉ can receive public funds to buy buses which can run on routes competing with commercial firms. Irish operators also complain that there is a conflict of interest in the owner of the state run bus company also being the licensing body.

A report on the issue says 300 additional buses have been bought since 1999 by Dublin Bus, and private operators have now made an official complaint to the European Commission.

Nominees needed

It's UK Bus Awards time already, although the competition is being launched a little earlier this year to give people more time to enter.

The big news for this year is the introduction of the 'Street Transit Award', and the reintroduction of the 'Bus in the Countryside Award', given in recognition of successful schemes that encourage greater use of the bus in rural areas.

John Owen, chairman of the UK Bus Awards, said: "The decision to widen our focus and include an award for street transit systems is a significant departure for us. It illustrates the versatility of urban passenger transport in the UK and the varied approaches being taken to tackle congestion and entice people away from the private car."

The award highlight will be the Belmont International Bus Operator of the Year Award, fought out between the winner of the Award for Operating Excellence for Operators of Large Fleets (250 or more vehicles) and the company that scoops the Award for Operating Excellence for Operators of Smaller Fleets (less than 250 vehicles).

The final shortlist will be announced on September 27 at the Lakeside Conference Centre, Birmingham. The presentation of UK Bus Awards will take place on November 1 at the London Hilton on Park Lane.

For more information go to *www.ukbusawards.co.uk*

Could you be up on stage this year?

A London Central decker in service in South London crashed after an incident involving a white van in a bus lane. The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van was allegedly trying to carry out a u-turn. The bus hit a tree head-on. Sixteen people were taken to hospital following the accident, but all were released the same day. The incident happened during rush hour on the South Kent Road last Wednesday evening. (John Stillwell/PA)

Briefly

A bus driver has been sacked after passengers complained he was driving the bus while playing a portable games machine. Passengers could clearly hear the sound effects from the game while he drove the bus from Accrington to Blackburn in Lancashire. When the bus company received complaints it checked CCTV footage and spotted the driver with the games console wedged between his knees.

The minimum wage will rise from £5.05 to £5.35 per hour from October. The youth rate, for workers aged 18-21, will rise from £4.25 to £4.45. The 16-17 year old wage will increase to £3.30 from £3.00. The government also says that salary sacrifice schemes, like those for childcare vouchers, will not count towards the minimum wage and that it will review the apprenticeship exemptions in 2008.

Moto has started a trial to enforce parking restrictions at its motorway service areas. Following continuing complaints from coach operators, the company is piloting new signage at five sites threatening to clamp car drivers who leave their vehicles in unauthorized areas. It has only been running for a short time, but the company says that already incidence of vehicles parking in inappropriate areas has been "drastically reduced".

An operator phoned *CBW* on Monday to warn about police action in Switzerland. Last weekend 19 coaches were pulled over and fined for being on the road for more than five hours, despite having two drivers. The reports are unconfirmed as *CBW* goes to press – more information next week.

Norwich City Council has voted for an all-county Concessionary Travel scheme. The move will cost the council an extra £30,000. Pensioners will be entitled to free travel after 0830hrs, an hour before the statutory obligation.

Will new Dart hit the bullseye?

ADL launches baby brother to Enviro 400 and 500 deckers

ADL chief executive Jim Hastie

Andrew Peace, news editor

After 15 years in production and over 12,000 sales, Britain's best-loved bus, the Pointer Dart, will be replaced by an all-new model - the Enviro200Dart - in June.

The launch of the new Dart - code named ADM04 - takes place just eight months after the successful debut of the Enviro 400 and 500 deckers - with which it shares 'family' features - and marks a significant milestone in the amazing turnaround at manufacturer Alexander Dennis (see over).

Exuberant ADL executives are confident of the buses prospects in a market they reckon is worth nearly 1,000 sales a year, although they acknowledge the market for midibuses is becoming crowded and maintaining its 46% share will be a challenge.

"The Enviro200Dart range has it all," says sales director Clive Hodgson. "It reinforces our product philosophy of 'Innovation with Style' - a modern, elegant vehicle, offering practical solutions that set new standards for the industry."

The E200Dart shares the ADL family 'face' with the Enviro400 decker, and its multiplexed electrics, cab layout, controls and touch screen diagnostics. Drivers switching between ADL products should be instantly familiar with their surroundings. Similarly, the interior layout and finish mirrors that of the impressive Enviro400.

Cantilever seats are standard for a more "open" environment on-board, with more fixed seats available on all models in the range. Air conditioning will be offered as an option.

The E200 is evolved from its ubiquitous predecessor, but shares its front axle with the Enviro300, and has a beefed up rear axle over its predecessor, along with revised suspension - ADL claims "significantly" improved ride and handling. It also has all-round disc brakes, for improved performance and easier/ lower cost maintenance.

Two uprated Euro IV Cummins ISBe engines - in three versions - will be available. The 4.5 litre four cylinder versions boast 140PS and 160PS (previously 3.9 litres, 135PS and 150PS), while the 6.7 litre six cylinder engine generates 205PS (up from 5.9 litre, 185PS). ADL has opted for SCR technology to meet Euro IV emissions standards and will not be offering an EGR alternative, citing 10% improved fuel economy and longer service intervals.

In a statement that will raise hackles in the design departments of other manufacturers, ADL says: "Unlike many of our competitors, ADL does not have the impediment of sister companies

driven by the needs of associate truck businesses. Our expertise is in the systems design, integration and packaging of technology for the bus industry and, founded on extensive research and our in-depth knowledge of bus operators and their expectations, our UK engine strategy will be based on the Cummins SCR solution. It provides a compliant, innovative, proven answer, offering lower weight and running costs." It says the E200 meets TfL emission requirements without the need for CRT.

Two automatic gearboxes will be available - the Allison S2100 four or five speed - with new electronic controls for improved shift and ride quality, and the Voith DV500 3 speed which comes with an integral retarder.

The new midi bus will be available in two lengths initially - 8.9m and 10.7m - with three more - 9.5m, 10.3m and 11.4m, a hybrid and a two-door version due to be launched by the end of the year. Production of the chassis is already underway at ADL's Guildford factory with the bodying due to start at Falkirk in April. Vehicles will be available to buy straight from the official launch in mid-June.

ADL's chassis business is just 7% of turnover so making the chassis available to other body builders is not a priority, although it will be sold "in time".

ADL claims the Enviro200H consumes 37% less fuel

Hybrid coming soon

ADL says it likes to advance with a mixture of evolution and revolution. Its evolution is the introduction of the Cummins Euro IV engines – the revolution will be the introduction of innovative hybrid technology later this year, for production in 2007.

ADL will not release details of its system yet, beyond saying that its technology is unlike anything seen yet on the market, that its Enviro200H will have a (part) rear window, and will be priced much more keenly than other hybrids.

In tests with the Energy Saving Trust, ADL claims the prototype Enviro200H has achieved a market-leading 37% reduction in fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions.

Jim Hastie, ADL chief executive, says: "The 2012 Olympic Games in London will be a catalyst for the introduction of low emission vehicles and we intend to be in the vanguard of that opportunity. Similarly, there is growing demand for hybrid options in North America and Hong Kong and we are exploring double deck solutions for both of these markets," referring to hybrid versions of its Enviro500.

TECH SPEC

ENGINES
- **4.5 litre Cummins ISBe 4-cylinder Power, torque: 140PS, 550Nm and 160PS, 600Nm**
- **6.7 litre Cummins ISBe 6-cylinder Power, torque: 205PS, 750Nm**

Both engines certified to Euro IV using SCR. All engines available in all lengths.

GEARBOXES
Allison 2100 4 or 5 speed automatic
- **Voith DV500 3 speed auto with integral retarder**
- **Allison gearbox available with Telma F5750 axle mounted electromagnetic retarder**

LENGTHS
8.9m, 10.7m initially, then 9.5m, 10.3m and 11.4m also by end of 2006

FRONT AXLE
- **Dana NDS56XLF forged 'I' beam axle (as per Enviro300)**
- **Dana 9-24 single reduction hypoid axle with ground gears**

SUSPENSION
Full air suspension with two 250mm air springs for front and rear axles, located by trailing taper leaf springs and Panhard rod. Two double acting dampers front and rear. Front kneel standard.

FRAME
All welded construction of channel and box section, designed for direct flooring and full integration with the body.

BRAKES
All round disc brakes (Wabco Pan 19.1, 375mm) with ABS

WHEELS & TYRES
Michelin 245/70R x 19.5 on spigot mounted 6.75" rims

STEERING
ZF 8095 integrally powered variable ratio
Steering column fully adjustable

FUEL TANK
220 litres steel construction + 21 litre Ad-Blue tank

ELECTRICAL
Actia multiplex electrical system with on-board diagnostics

DESIGN WEIGHT (excluding tyres)
Front axle: 5000kg
Rear Axle: 8100kg
Gross: 13100kg

PLATED WEIGHT
Front axle: 4480kg
Rear axle: 8100kg
Gross: 12580kg (Voith gearbox)
12000kg (Allison gearbox)

OPTIONS
Air conditioning drive facility, tachograph, kneel at both axles, front wheel embellishers, reverse bleeper, towing eyes

ADL overcomes tough start

First annual report after Transbus takeover shows encouragement

Andrew Jarosz, northern correspondent

The first annual report and accounts for Alexander Dennis Limited (ADL), the manufacturer which took over bus building from Transbus in May 2004, show that after an initial painful and costly restructuring exercise, the business is now trading profitably and on course for further sales growth and increased profit in its second year of operation.

The company, which purchased the business from the administrator for £38.5 million, wrote a goodwill adjustment of nearly £22 million into its accounts, even though the book value of fixed and current assets was over £34 million. Fair value adjustments that were made included the restoration of warranty covers, liabilities under TUPE transfer rules, and adjustment on asset values following a review by directors of the underlying assets acquired.

In the first critical five month period, the business shed 190 jobs and closed plants at Anston, South Yorkshire, Wigan in Greater Manchester, and at Larbert near Falkirk. Having to cover redundancy costs and costly inherited warranty issues cost ADL well over £5 million, and the group had to rebuild a distressed order book, as well as its depleted stock of materials. Thus in that initial period, ADL suffered an operating loss of £9.8 million, on sales of about £45 million.

Performance in the following twelve month period showed an improved turnover of £150m, and resulted in pre-exceptional earnings of £9.6 million and an operating profit of £7 million.

Full financial results for the sixteen and a half month period ended September 30, 2005 (as published) show that group turnover was £195.7 million and the gross profit on sales was £29.7 million, after £3.6 million exceptional and goodwill costs. The operating profit was £4.1 million before exceptional and goodwill costs of £6.9 million, leaving an operating loss of £2.8 million. The Group's pre-tax loss rose to £6.6 million after £3.8 million of interest charges, but a tax add-back of £1.7 million left a loss of £4.9 million.

In less than two years chief executive Jim Hastie and his team claim to have turned the business round. It started with a £49 million order book and now boasts a £100 million order book; there were over 1,600 employees when ADL took over, and while that was initially reduced to 1,300, it is now up to 1,400 and ADL is looking to recruit more.

"We have come a long way in a short time, and we still have much to achieve," said Mr Hastie.

"We have turned an important corner and I expect sales to grow by 10% in this, our second full year. It has been particularly pleasing to create another 100 jobs at Falkirk, where we now employ 860 people, and to secure a further 500 at Guildford, and in our various parts and service centres in the UK and overseas."

SUMMARY

Accounting period from May 18, 2004 to 30 September 2005	£m
Turnover	195.7
Gross profit	29.7
Operating loss	(2.8)
Pre-tax loss	(6.6)
Retained loss	(4.9)
Net Assets	10.4
Divisional turnover	
UK and Europe	154.1
USA	31.2
Far East	10.4
Total	195.7
Exceptional costs	**£000**
Reorganisation of aftermarket activities	880
Closure of Wigan and Larbert facilities	4,013
Restructuring of company engineering resource	354
Other (including legal fees)	490
Total	5,737

The ADL board: Standing, from left: Ian Moore, David Murray, David Harraghy, Maurice Barr. Seated: Bill Simpson, Bill Cameron OBE, Jim Hastie and Frank Daly

TRANSBUS TAKEOVER

Acquisition of bus body and chassis business of Transbus international, together with related aftermarket activities from the administrator, and the entire share capital of Transbus (Far East) Limited on May 21, 2004

	Book value £000	Fair value adjustment £000	Revised fair value £000
Assets			
Fixed assets	11,128	1,386	12,514
Current assets	23,136	(3,790)	19,346
Total	34,264	(2,404)	31,860
Total liabilities		(9,948)	(9,948)
Fair value of net assets acquired			21,912
Goodwill arising			16,775
Acquisition expenses			187
Consideration (total)			38,500

UK Coach & Bus Trade Event
5th & 6th April
To be held at A.M. Phillip, Edinburgh

Are you looking for a quality new or pre-owned coach then why not come along to the UK Coach & Bus Trade event. In conjunction with A.M. Phillip, the Trade event will be held at A.M. Phillip, Edinburgh. There will be an excellent range of vehicles on display including the new Beulas Cygnus and the Indcar Maxim. All coaches will be available for test drives.

10.00 am - 4.00 pm each day

Excellent Value

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Why not come along and see what we have to offer and you could be driving away with a fantistic new or pre-owned coach.

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Royal approval for Wrightbus

Prince Andrew visits Ballymena factory as First places £48m order

Andrew Peace, news editor

Northern Ireland manufacturer Wrightbus timed a royal visit by Prince Andrew last week to coincide with the announcement of a £48 million order from First Group.

Prince Andrew visited the company's Ballymena factory as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations. On a tour of the recently upgraded facility he saw the new StreetCar vehicles being readied for their upcoming debut in York, and unveiled a plaque commemorating Wright's 60 years in business.

Chairman of the Wright Group, William Wright - who started the business along with his father Robert Wright in 1946 - said: "We are delighted and honoured to receive a visit from his Royal Highness and are proud to be receiving such a substantial order from First Group today, continuing our long-standing relationship with them."

The 320 vehicle order comprises of 226 Eclipse Urban single deckers, 66 Eclipse Gemini double deckers and 28 StreetCars.

The single deckers, on Volvo's B7RLE chassis, will be split between Manchester (113), Glasgow (110) and First's new Aircoach service at Belfast City Airport (3). All the single deckers will be equipped with an eight camera CCTV system, with the Glasgow vehicles adding a driver's assault door and screen. The Aircoach buses will have an additional middle door, luggage pens and a PA system.

The double deckers are destined for Leeds (28), Bradford (20), South Yorkshire (10) and Somerset & Avon (8). Based on Volvo's B7TL chassis, they will all come with a nine camera CCTV system - 11 on the Bradford vehicles - and Wright's new Telematics platform which would simplify the installation of any future passenger information systems and 'smart' ticketing solutions.

Prince Andrew with Wright Group chairman William Wright

Fifteen of the StreetCars have been allocated to Leeds with the remainder earmarked to other, as yet unannounced, schemes.

Deliveries are understood to have already started and will be finished by the end of 2006, taking the total number of Wrightbus vehicles in the First Group fleet to over 2,500.

Wrightbus employs 950 staff, sells around 950 buses a year and turns over £100m.

Scots link-up probed by OFT

The OFT has referred last year's link-up between Scottish Citylink and Stagecoach to the Competition Commission.

It says it has a duty to refer a deal to the CC if it believes that a merger may have lead to a "substantial lessening of competition", and that this requirement is now met in relation to scheduled long distance coach services in Scotland.

Vincent Smith, director of competition enforcement at the OFT says: "The transaction combines most of Scotland's intercity coach operations. The parties to the joint venture are each others' closest competitors and there has already been a loss of competition where the services of Stagecoach and Citylink overlap."

Stagecoach Scotland managing director Tom Wileman said: "We are surprised and disappointed at the decision of the OFT - not just for our business but for our passengers.

"We do not believe there was any need to refer the joint venture to the Competition Commission, particularly as it has delivered the biggest improvement to inter-city coach services in Scotland in years."

Wileman said he was confident that when the CC looked at the issue in detail it would realise "that the main competition to the coach is inter-city rail services run by First ScotRail".

He added: "First ScotRail is operated by FirstGroup, which is the dominant bus and rail operator in Scotland, with an almost 70% share of public transport revenues."

The CC is expected to report by August 29.

Stagecoach entered the joint venture with Scottish Citylink - owned by the world's second largest land-transport company, ComfortDelGro through its UK subsidiary Braddell PLC - last September.

In return for a 35% stake in Scottish Citylink, Stagecoach gave CDG the right to operate its Motorvator and megabus.com services in Scotland. CDG retained 65% of Scottish Citylink.

No cash changed hands during the deal which was expected to generate revenues of around £18m per year. Megabus.com services outside of Scotland were not included in the deal, except for cross-border routes.

Tom Wileman, managing director of Stagecoach Scotland

Scania to set up repair network

Scania is establishing a network of 17 bus and coach regional centres around the country to handle complex repairs.

Each location will house specialised maintenance equipment and specially trained staff. Technicians will also be available to provide advice to any of the other 90 Scania service locations around the country.

"While every Scania location deals with routine bus and coach servicing and maintenance, the vast range of configurations and body fitments found in PCVs today means that specialist knowledge is frequently required," says Geoff Bell, Scania (GB) bus and coach director. "Therefore we are establishing these regional centres of excellence to handle the more in-depth issues that occur."

The centres are: Scania Scotland in Aberdeen and Newbridge; Haydock Commercials in Haydock; Scania North East in Washington and Normanton; West Pennine Trucks in Trafford Park; Road Trucks in Larne; Keltruck in Nottingham and West Bromwich; TruckEast in Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Stowmarket; Silurian Scania in Cardiff; Scania South West in Avonmouth and Fareham; and Scania South East in Purfleet and Heathrow.

Dr Stephen Bea, head of sales and maketing at Linnig, Kevin Booth, MD of HDP, and Dr Uwe Spörl, CEO of Linnig, shake on the new tie-up

OE manufacturer ties deal with HDP

One of Germany's biggest air conditioning parts suppliers has appointed Heavy Duty Parts as sole authorised distributor of its products for the UK and Ireland.

Linnig Antriebstechnik GmbH of Markdorf, Germany, produces a huge range of parts for OE fitment by major manufacturers.

They are the OE manufacturer of electromagnetic clutches for air conditioning compressors and fan drive units, as well as the whole drive mechanism for Euro III engines onwards, consisting of the angle drive gearbox and karden joint linking the fan to the radiator.

Kevin Booth of Heavy Duty Parts said: "This new partnership with Linnig strengthens our position within the UK coach market and I'm pleased that we are now being recognised by the OEMs as a major player within the UK.

"The portfolio of products that Linnig manufactures will fall nicely into place alongside some of our current product ranges such as parts for air conditioning as well as parts for Evobus vehicles."

Grey area for industry?

According to a new survey, a quarter of all bus and coach operator directors will be aged over 60 by the end of 2006. The proportion will rise to 46% in five years time if they stay in post.

The study, by industry analysts Plimsoll Publishing, examined the impact these aging directors might have on the financial performance of the top 551 bus and coach operators in the UK, with some surprising results.

The top 551 companies are lead by 1,032 directors, the youngest being 19 and the oldest 90. The highest proportion (20%) are aged 56-60, with 16% being 65 and over.

In addition, Plimsoll found that 57% of companies overall are in "clear financial difficulties", with 19% failing to make profits last year.

David Pattison, senior analyst, says: "It's debatable how many can afford to retire. If they are thinking of selling up then the business needs to command a good price if it's going to finance the winters in the Caribbean."

■ The full publication is available for £350. Call 01642 626400 for more details.

Briefly

GoSkills is holding two seminars for potential training providers to discuss periodic training under the terms of the EU Training Directive. The seminars will take place on Tuesday, April 4 in Birmingham and on Tuesday, April 11 in Scotland, from 11am to 3pm. Cost £50 + VAT. Call 0121 635 5520.

Hamilton Road - 13:32
7 Kidlington 6 mins
500 Water Eaton P&R 10 mins
7B Kidlington 12 mins
7 Kidlington 17 mins
500 Water Eaton P&R 25 mins
27 to 29 see TT
Later departures >>

Oxfordshire County Council says its internet-based passenger information system (above) is a huge success, with 10m hits since it was launched last July. The website – at www.oxontime.com – uses satellite tracking data to allow passengers to check if their bus is running on time before leaving the house, and is updated every 30 seconds. It covers 800 stops, with more now planned. The system may also be expanded to send the info to on-street signs and mobile phones.

Three men were killed after the car they were travelling in crashed into a bus in Oldham last Friday. Two other men in the Peugeot 106 were critically injured in the accident on the A62 in Scouthead. The bus driver was uninjured.

TfL has launched a new £200m bond as part of the financing for its £10bn, 5-year investment programme. The interest rate on the 25 year bond is 4.5%, compared with 5% forTfL's first bond launched in December 2004. TfL says the bond was "significantly oversubscribed".

Workington in Cumbria will have a new rail and bus interchange by 2010. The £4m project was announced by Cumbria County Council last week.

Regional News

CBW takes a look at the big issues where you live in our round-up of the regions. If you've got a local issue you would like us to cover, contact Andrew Peace at *andrew.peace@rouncymedia.co.uk*

NORTH

To accommodate new contracts, **First in Greater Manchester** has opened a second dedicated schools unit, at the Thomas Hardie Volvo Truck and Bus dealership in Knowsley. The first school's unit was opened at Ince, near Wigan.

When the business becomes more established in the area, the company will look at tendering for more work, and for its own premises. The unit has its own staff, but will be managed from Ince.

Simon Bennett, network director for First in Greater Manchester, said: "We worked hard to win tendered school contracts in the Merseyside area and our initial intention was that any contracts we were awarded would be operated from Ince.

"However we quickly realised that to deliver against the contracts we needed to have a presence on the ground closer to the locality. We were very pleased to reach agreement with Thomas Hardie and everything has gone very smoothly."

The firm will operate a fleet of 25 vehicles - including three FirstStudent vehicles, exclusively allocated to a private schools contract. The majority of Knowsley-based services are operated using dedicated schoolbuses. The remaining 22 vehicles operate tendered school services across the Merseyside region.

Mr Bennett added: "We've developed an excellent relationship with MerseyTravel, and our hope is that based on the success of operating the current contracts we might be successful in the future tendering for others. If that proves to be the case, then we will look positively at opening our own depot and at other business opportunities in the locality."

REP. IRELAND

Police in Co. Westmeath are baffled and staff at **KVC** shocked after mystery raiders cut through security fencing at the Kilbeggan-based PSV manufacturer and stole three brand new special-needs minibuses which had just been completed and were ready for delivery to customers. The three vehicles were recovered a day later, being found abandoned in car-parks more than 100km away in Co. Kilkenny after being spotted by members of the public who had heard of the theft on national TV and radio news.

"It's a complete mystery to us why anyone would try to steal these buses," KVC Managing Director Danny McGee told *CBW* after the theft. "These were custom-fitted for use by Special Needs groups, and really they would not be suitable for use either as a normal minibus or as a van. They are fairly unique vehicles, and would be very easy to trace back to us by anyone in the business."

Above: The KVC/ Esker premises from where three special needs minibuses were stolen. Left: First in Greater Manchester has opened a dedicated schools unit in Knowsley

The break-in at the KVC/Esker facility at Comagh Business Park in Kilbeggan happened sometime between 6pm on Sunday, March 12 and 8am on Monday, March 13, and Gardai believe that at least three, but possibly four or more people were involved in the theft. Security fencing around the site was cut, and the raiders broke into the office building to take the keys for the vehicles.

Mr McGee added: "Fortunately we understand from the Gardai that the buses are undamaged, and nothing else was damaged here apart from the fence, so I guess this is a story with a happy ending."

MIDLANDS

Two years after Nottingham and Derby laid on links between themselves and **Nottingham East Midlands Airport** (NEMA), neighbouring Leicester is also to gain direct services.

East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) is in the final stages of approving funding to support a project proposal co-ordinated by Leicestershire County Council. Final details will be signed off over the coming weeks and the service will be

Transport minister Derek Twigg

Briefly

Beleaguered First Potteries will star in an episode of the upcoming local radio series, 'Journeys', on BBC Radio Stoke. The programme will give listeners an insight into the challenges of operating bus services, and tackles local concerns like punctuality, reliability and engineering head-on. "I hope that, after the programme's been aired, listeners will have a better understanding of how services are delivered and the progress that First in the Potteries has and is continuing to make," says commercial director Paul de Santis.

Translink is blaming rising fuel costs for above-inflation fare increases on its town and rural services. Belfast's Metro bus fares will increase by 7% on average, while rural Ulsterbus fares will increase by 9%, as will cross-border services.

operational from the autumn.

EMDA has been working with a range of partners from Derby, Leicester, Nottingham and their counties, plus the airport, since last November to identify ways to improve bus access to NEMA. The integrated package of measures also includes improvements to existing bus services between Derby, NEMA and Loughborough as well as Nottingham and NEMA which will see an increase in the number of services per hour. The Leicester services currently proposed would run hourly for 18 hours a day on a dedicated fleet of upgraded vehicles used only on the new route.

■ Coleshill's new railway station will also include a new bus station: transport minister Derek Twigg last week announced £4.1m towards building the **Coleshill Multi-Modal Transport Interchange**. The interchange will offer integrated bus and rail services and improved connections with Birmingham International airport and the NEC. It will also provide a 200-space park and ride facility connected to the M42 and the A446, a five bay bus interchange and a new road bridge over the railway. As part of the scheme the local authority has agreed to improve bus provision.

The total scheme cost is £8.35m of which £4.1m will be funded from the Local Transport Plan Process. The balance will come from Warwickshire County Council, developer contributions and the County Council's joint promoters Laing Rail.

■ **Mansfield** has won initial funding for a new transport interchange. £480,000 will come from the East Midlands Development Agency and the Alliance Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership. The £10m project will link the rebuilt bus station with the train station, and also include new office space. Initial work starts this month, and is scheduled to finish by 2009.

LONDON

Residents in New Malden, London will be the first to take part in a new Personal Travel Planning (PTP) scheme, run by **TfL** and the Royal Borough of Kingston.

Local Travel Advisors will visit around 24,000 homes from May this year offering individual "advice, information and encouragement" to make more use of sustainable transport.

"Many people are keen to choose healthier and more environmentally friendly ways to travel, but are unsure what options are open to them," says a TfL spokesman. "By contacting people individually we will be able to provide the best journey options for their needs. TfL is investing to improve services and we want to make sure people know how to take advantage of those improvements."

Kingston says if the scheme is a success it will roll it out to other parts of the borough, and hopes that two thirds of its population will have been visited by 2009. TfL is also looking to introduce the scheme in other parts of London.

SOUTH EAST

Worthing Coaches, part of the Lucketts Travel Group, has bought **Flagship Eastbourne**, the coach company set up three years ago by Eastbourne Buses.

Steve Barnett, managing director of Eastbourne Buses, said: "The Flagship Eastbourne brand and vehicles are being sold to Worthing Coaches. Nothing is going to change other than that. They will still run from our yard.

"The business needs a lift and these are the best people to do it. We are bus operators, not coach operators. It's a marginal business for us and we have been looking for a high-class operator and specialist in the field to take the brand forward."

Flagship Eastbourne will continue to operate from the Eastbourne Buses base in Birch Road. Former manager Mark Willis - who left Flagship last year to join Worthing Coaches - returns to take control of the operation, at the end of March.

■ Newly created **The Lighthouse Line** has begun operation in Eastbourne.

The company is a part of **Cavendish Motor Services**. Director Christian Harmer, also managing director of Renown Travel in Bexhill, said: "We have been taking note of the concerns of the people of Eastbourne who feel that they don't have the public transport service they wish for, and we've decided to start the Lighthouse Line to cater for them."

David Howard, former managing director of Eastbourne Buses and government director for transport on the Isle of Man, is also MD of Cavendish Motor Services. He said: "It's important a local bus company primarily provides a local service and it has become clear over recent months that this is not happening."

Roadworks

M74 Hamilton
Until May 12: Roadworks and contraflow both ways at J5 A725 (Raith Interchange)

M8 Renfrewshire
Until May 10: Delays expected and slip road onto motorway closed on M8 Eastbound at J28 (Glasgow Airport)

M80 Falkirk
Until April 2: Speed restriction of 40mph both ways between M876 J5 (Bankhead roundabout) and M9 J9, A91, A872 (Pirnhall roundabout)

M6 Cheshire
Between 2100 and 0500hrs until March 31: Entry slip road closed during the night on M6 Southbound at J21A M62 (Croft Interchange)

M55 Lancashire
Until March 31: One lane closed both ways between J3 A585 (Kirkham) and J1 A6 / B6241 (Fulwood)

M1 Derbyshire
Between 2100hrs and 0600hrs until April 8: Exit slip road closed northbound at J29 A617 / A6175 (Chesterfield / Mansfield)

M4 South Gloucestershire
Between 0530 and 2100hrs until April 27: Speed restriction and narrow lanes on M4 both ways at J20 M5 (Almondsbury Interchange/M5)

M4 South Wales
Until April 13: Speed restriction of 50 mph eastbound between J40 A4107 (Port Talbot) and J39 A48 (Margam On Slip)

A1(M) Hertfordshire
Between 2000 and 0600hrs until June 14: Two lanes closed and speed restriction of 50 mph both ways between J6 A1000 / B656 / (Welwyn / Welwyn Garden City) and J7 A602 (Stevenage)

M5 North Somerset
Until July 31: Speed restriction both ways between J19 A369 (Portishead) and J20 B3133 (Clevedon)

A39 Somerset
Until May 21: Road closed between B3135 and A37

In association with
trafficlink
www.trafficlink.co.uk

Scania's Irizar PB helped the Swedish manufacturer's results

Registrations continue to slide

Christopher Macgowan, SMMT chief executive, believes the steady start to 2006 will see an upturn to underpin the predictions of a stable market for this year. He said: "Reasonable bus registrations for the year to February have so far offset some softening in demand for coaches. February is traditionally a lower volume month - March and April will give a better indication to the true condition of the sector."

The rolling year total was 12,467 units, down 0.8% on the same period in 2005. Bus and coach demand continues to hold at around 12,000 rolling year units and is expected to continue in the short-term, with February bus and coach registrations firm, up 2% on last year.

Despite minibus registrations to 3.5t being on a downward trend since mid-2003, figures have shown some recent stability, down a modest 3.7% for the three months to February.

All single-deck buses were up 2.6% to 10,503 units for the rolling year to February. Double-decker registrations were down 20.2% and up 7.2% for the previous three and six months.

Rolling year coach registrations were at 1,093 in February, down 2.2% on the same period last year. The rolling year totals for coaches 3.5 to 16t, and coaches above 16t were down 1.7% and 2.4% respectively.

COACH AND BUS

Manufacturer	Feb 06	Feb 05	YTD 06	YTD 05
Volvo	85	108	123	234
Alexander Dennis	31	72	85	111
Optare	31	30	65	60
Scania	39	12	63	66
MAN	20	4	47	9
VDL Bus	12	12	37	17
Irisbus	18	26	30	64
Mercedes-Benz	9	3	27	6
BMC	14	8	25	17
Bova	2	3	5	5
Other British	0	0	1	0
Other Imports	6	14	18	33
Total	267	292	526	626

COACH

Manufacturer	Feb 06	Feb 05	YTD 06	YTD 05
Scania	16	3	40	26
VolvoBus	19	24	37	47
Irisbus	6	13	15	29
Setra	4	5	12	8
Bova	2	3	5	5
Mercedes-Benz	0	1	5	3
BMC	1	2	2	2
Caetano Toyota	0	4	1	11
Alexander Dennis	0	0	2	0
MAN	1	2	2	2
Others	0	5	0	14
Total	49	60	121	145

BUS

Manufacturer	Feb 06	Feb 05	YTD 06	YTD 05
VolvoBus	66	84	86	187
Alexander Dennis	31	72	83	111
Optare	31	30	65	60
MAN	19	2	45	7
VDL Bus	12	12	37	17
Scania	23	9	23	40
Mercedes-Benz	9	2	23	3
BMC	13	8	23	17
Irisbus	12	13	15	35
Other British	0	0	1	0
Other Imports	2	0	4	0
Total	218	232	405	481

Combined, coach and bus deliveries for February and year to date

Wales focuses on school buses

Welsh Assembly plans could lead way for rest of UK

Andrew Peace, news editor

The Welsh Assembly is set to introduce new standards for school buses in the country, in what is seen as a trial for the introduction of similar standards in England.

In the first move of its kind, the Assembly Government is seeking 'framework' powers in the forthcoming 'Education and Inspection Bill' to legislate on school transport.

An extra £1m of annual funding, starting in 2007/08, has been granted by the Assembly to help local education authorities phase out the use of double-deck buses, introduce CCTV and codes of conduct for pupil behaviour, set age limits on buses used, to require vehicles to be equipped with seatbelts, and ensure their use. The money is to be spread among the 22 local education authorities in Wales.

The new standards are the result of recommendations made by the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee (ELLC) following the death of schoolboy Stuart Cunningham-Jones in 2002. John Pockett, CPT director of government relations, Wales, has been on the ELLC since last summer. He told *CBW*: "We are in the process of drafting guidelines - obviously then it is a matter for government. On the face of it, an extra £1m is not going to go very far, but what I'm keen to do is work with the government. An extra £1m would be

The BRT system has been a hit in the States – will it take off here?

Stuart Cunningham-Jones died in this crash in 2002

welcome, I see it as a good start."

Others have been more critical. One operator told *CBW*: "£50k for each education authority is Mickey Mouse money - but I suppose it looks good from a political perspective."

On the issue of Welsh operators being 'guinea-pigged' for the future introduction of school bus legislation in England, Mr Pockett said: "I've heard that said - with my tongue in my cheek I would say, good, Wales is the leader of the world.We were the first to introduce concessionary fares for the elderly which everybody is now using. It's a sensible approach, to see what happens. What operators want is clarity and consistency across the LEAs and the sooner the better.

We would prefer to do things by consensus, but if it becomes legislation and roots out operators not running services properly then we would be all for that."

A spokesperson for the Welsh Assembly told *CBW* that the only thing so far decided was to implement the recommendations of the committee, and to allocate extra resources. The details of how the scheme will roll out, and the timeframe, have yet to be decided. The Committee is due to meet again this week, with Jane Davidson AM, minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in attendance.

Driver groomed girl, 14

A school bus driver has been jailed for two years for grooming a teenage girl for sex.

Following the case at Warwick Crown Court it emerged that Kenneth Whitup (47) had managed to get a job with Lutterworth Coaches, Leicestershire, despite having been convicted of indecently assaulting a girl in 1997, while working as a school bus driver.

The latest offence took place in March 2005 when Whitup met a 14-year-old girl on the school run. He started sending her explicit text messages which were found by the girl's mother.

Whitup - who lived at Great Oxendon, Market Harborough, at the time of the offence - admitted to arranging or facilitating a meeting with a child to commit a sexual offence.

Judge Marten Coates disqualified Whitup from working with children, banned him from being alone with any child outside his family and contacting any girl under 18. He was also ordered to register as a sex offender.

Warwickshire County Council, which contracted school services to Lutterworth Coaches, has now introduced criminal record checks. Lutterworths would not comment.

Briefly

Revised building regulations - which improve environmental standards by 40% - were laid before Parliament last week. They come into effect on April 6 and affect all new buildings and work done on existing buildings. Developers will now need to make greater use of energy-saving insulation and consider low or zero carbon systems like solar panels and wind-turbines. See *www.odpm.gov.uk* for more information.

North Yorkshire County Council is reportedly reconsidering its decision to charge students aged over 16 £8 a week for transport. The move was forced by budgetary difficulties but now councillors say it could result in increased congestion and damage to the environment.

According to the CPT, the DfT says the legal requirement for operators to notify passengers that they must wear seatbelts in PCVs has been deferred to September.

The Rural Transport Partnership is funding three new minibuses in Gloucestershire by levying a tax on second homes in the county, according to the BBC.

BRT given UK push

A new association dedicated to Bus Rapid Transit was launched last week.

BRT-UK, supported by the DfT and with links to the North American BRT Institute, aims to raise the "potential and profile" of BRT within the UK. The launch was attended by Stagecoach, Arriva, First Group and Wrightbus.

A statement from the group, chaired by Colin Eastman of Coventry City Council, says: "BRT-UK does not seek to promote bus rapid transit above other modes but to enhance the understanding of BRT and what it can do to allow a fair and informed comparison to be made against other modes."

Professor George Hazel of transport consultants MRC McLean Hazel, who started the ball rolling along with Colin Eastman and First Group, told *CBW*: "I think there's a lack of knowledge of what BRT can offer, we are trying to put that right."

The organisation is open to all who are "actively engaged in the planning and provision of BRT in the UK".

■ See *www.brtuk.org* for more info.

Last PMT depot closed

First PMT - now called First in North Staffordshire and South Cheshire - will close its second largest depot, at Newcastle-under-Lyme. The majority of its Potteries services will now be concentrated on its remaining depot at Adderley Green.

Planned for September, the closure will cull the last original PMT depot, which was opened in 1933. Until 1966 it boasted 'The Four in Hand' - a cafeteria which became an essential refreshment stop for express coaches until the M6 motorway was opened.

"There will be no compulsory redundancies as a consequence of this decision and no detrimental impacts on services," explained commercial director Paul De Santis. "By realising the land value of the site and then employing that capital to improve the already more flexible facilities at Adderley Green and Crewe, and also to invest in new buses for the fleet, we're confident that we can deliver further service improvements for customers."

Services and staff will be relocated to either Adderley Green or the new Crewe depot. Consultations on the closure process will take place.

INTERNATIONAL

Fuel cell buses to get longer trials in Europe

Extra support for environmentally friendly transport

The European fuel cell bus projects CUTE (Clean Urban Transport for Europe) and ECTOS (Ecological City Transport System) are to be extended. Seven of the original 10 cities operating fuel cell buses in regular service — Amsterdam, Barcelona, Hamburg, London, Luxembourg, Madrid and Reykjavik — will receive further support.

The project covers a total of 27 buses and DaimlerChrysler says this will consolidate and verify the operating data gathered over the past two years.

The extension of the contract also involves the development and demonstration of a test vehicle for fuel cell buses of the next generation.

The CUTE project was launched at the end of 2001 by DaimlerChrysler, with the previous cities, plus Porto, Stockholm, Stuttgart and several infrastructure companies. Three more Mercedes-Benz fuel cell buses have been operating in Reykjavik as part of the ECTOS project, which is also funded by the EU. In addition, the public transport systems of Beijing, China, and Perth, Australia, now also include three fuel cell buses each. By the end of December 2005, these 36 buses had been in operation for more than 75,000 hours and covered almost 1.1 million kilometers.

Berlin hopes to have 14 hydrogen-fuelled buses in time for the World Cup

These real life tests have helped with lengthening the lifespan of the drive system, especially the fuel cell stacks. The current generation of fuel cell stacks has been in operation for more than 2,000 hours without any loss of performance and far exceeding expectations. Operating fuel cell buses is also helping to build up the hydrogen infrastructure that is necessary for the buses' daily operation.

The study extension is associated with the HyFLEET:CUTE hydrogen project, and is sponsored by the European Commission as part of its Sixth Framework Program on research. The international demonstration project concerning local public transportation in Europe involves the co-operation of 31 partners from politics, industry and science to promote the development of hydrogen technology.

■ Fourteen MAN buses with hydrogen-fuelled combustion engines are to join the EU HyFLEET:CUTE project in Berlin. The city plans to have the new vehicles in operation in time for the start of the World Cup. They will be remain in service with the Berlin transport authority BVG undergoing practical trials until the project ends in early 2009.

As part of the project BVG will set up a special operating base for hydrogen buses at its depot in Berlin-Spandau, with a filling station built next door by Total Oil. BVG, TOTAL and MAN have already gained experience in operating hydrogen buses in scheduled service having run projects in Munich since 2004 and Erlangen in 1996. Three MAN hydrogen buses have covered over 450,000km operating at Munich Airport since 1999.

NEOMAN Bus GmbH is also negotiating with further customers throughout Europe about the delivery of other vehicles from 2007 after the conclusion of the HyFLEET:CUTE project.

LA opts for BRT system

Bus Rapid Transit systems continue to capture the imagination of operators in the US.

Foothill Transit of West Covina, California, has confirmed an order for 30 articulated 60-BRT buses from North American Bus Industries (NABI), worth approximately $22 million.

Running on CNG fuel, the buses will form an integral element of Foothill Transit's new high speed Silver Streak BRT service carrying commuters across Los Angeles. They are to carry a highly distinctive livery and should all be delivered before the end of this year - in preparation for the launch of the new BRT services in 2007.

The NABI 60-BRTs will be put into operation in Los Angeles

Setra celebrates the 5,000th 400 Series delivery

Setra 400 series passes 5,000 deliveries

Setra has delivered its 5,000th 400 series touring coach, to Kent and Ulla Jonsson, proprietors of Swedish coach company, Stigen Buss AB.

So far 3500 TopClass 400 models have been sold since the launch in 2001, while 1500 ComfortClass 400 models have been delivered since 2003.

The top-seller in the TopClass 400 series, with over 900 vehicle sales to date, is the two-axle S 415 HD touring coach which has seen strong demand from Germany, Italy, France and Austria. The three-axle S 417 HDH has chalked up close to 600 sales in Germany and is also very popular in Turkey. The most successful ComfortClass 400 series models are the two-axle S 415 GT-HD with around 600 units sold and the three-axle S 416 GT-HD with around 300 sales.

The new S 416 HDH handed over to Stigen Buss AB features a glass roof and is equipped with a proximity control system, TopAir air-conditioning system, a galley, audio/PA system with a CD/DVD changer and 50 sleeper seats.

UTC-Van Hool to build Flanders fuel cell bus

Bill Godwin

Reports from the USA - where Van Hool-built fuel cell buses fitted with American designed fuel cell and driveline technology have been enthusiastically received by two public transport operators in California - indicate that the concept is to be introduced later this year in a 'try-before-you-buy' programme in Belgium.

A statement by Jan van Dokkum, president of UTC Power in Connecticut, at last week's National Hydrogen Association conference in Long Beach, California, revealed that the project would deliver a demonstration vehicle to DeLijn, Belgium's largest passenger transport fleet operator for a six month period before being offered to other bus companies.

Supporting the project, Leopold Van Hool, managing director of Koningshooikt-based bus builder Van Hool, said that more extensive use of the technology in the European market, so far mainly expressed by the EU CUTE fleet of Mercedes-Benz Citaro fuel cell buses, would advance the acceptance of the alternative fuel practice.

VDL's Italian job

VDL Bova made its 250th sale in Italy at the end of last year. The Futura FHD 13-380XE was sold to LVL Interlines, an Italian touring coach operator specialising in national and international group travel, as well as regional operations.

The Futura has been equipped with 48+1+1 seats, a toilet, 2 refrigerators, high-spec seats and 15" LCD screens.

LVL ordered two Futuras on this occasion, both of which will be used on regional services: twice a week the coaches will run from Castrovillari in the south of Italy to Ferrara in the north, and back, a round trip of around 1,200 miles.

The family business employs a staff of 140 and has a fleet of 130 buses and coaches, around 10% of which are VDL

LVL's new Futura FHD – VDL Bova's 250th Italian sale

World

Scania is to move the production of axles and gearboxes from its factories at Falun and Sibbhult to Sodertalje in Sweden. The company will also concentrate its European parts management in Belgium. The moves will take place over a projected three-year period and Scania estimates the cost savings will amount to SEK 300 million (£22 million). "We are acting now in order to maintain our long term competitiveness and to retain jobs in Sweden," said Per Hallberg, head of production and procurement.

Hundreds of parents demonstrated outside a council meeting in Philadelphia last week over plans to replace the incumbent schools operator with a cheaper tender. One parent said: "Our children deserve the very best, care does not always come from the lowest price tag." The councillors were split on the decision, eventually deciding to speak to other operators.

JCDecaux – the French outdoor advertising company – has announced a 25% increase in profits, to $235m, on the back of increased revenue from adverts on public transport. Worldwide the company expects the market to grow by over 5% this year. The company signed its first contract in India last week, offering ad space at bus stops in New Delhi.

Bus fares in Vietnamese capital Ho Chi Minh City have doubled since the government withdrew its subsidy last year, but ridership has fallen just 2.6%. The government also stopped subsidising eight out of nine inter-city routes – but ridership has slumped 35% within the last 12 months.

Bus sales in Russia were up 37% in January 2006 compared to January 2005 – 4,126 buses and chassis were sold. The biggest manufacturer was GAZ, with 1,838 sales, then PAZ (993 sales), Likinsky Bus (183) and NefAZ (88).

IRELAND

The new route 4 service between Ballymun and the Rock Road is seemingly ideal for bendy buses

Bendies ride again in Dublin

Ireland keen to find a job for beleaguered articulated Volvos

Gabriel Conway, Irish correspondent

Dublin's much-maligned bendy bus fleet has gone back into full-time service.

The move is part of the package of improvements delivered under the first phase of Transport 21 – Ireland's £20 billion transport plan.

The bendies are operating the new route 4 service between Ballymun and the Rock Road. With questions now being raised about the operation of similar long buses in London, this latest attempt to find employment for the least-used members of the Bus Átha Cliath fleet will be watched with great interest both in Dublin and further afield.

The operator has remained tight-lipped about the fate of the 20-strong artic fleet, which has spent the last 18 months virtually idle, working single extra journeys in the weekday peaks only, following their removal from a busy cross-city service.

Purchased in 2000 with money from the National Development Project (NDP), the fleet of Wright Eclipse Fusion-bodied Volvo B7Ls were stored until Spring 2001, when a number of special routes were created to utilize them. The routes gradually converted to conventional buses or ceased operating altogether and in 2002 the fleet was switched to the high-profile 10 service, a cross-city route serving University College Dublin.

Lack of road space on many parts of the route and bunching of vehicles led to the buses being delayed and frequently blocking other services, and the fleet was removed from fulltime service in October 2004, and confined to peak hour 'euro duty' workings, which saw the buses sitting unused in the depot throughout the middle part of the day, and all weekend.

Even these duties were not problem-free, as passengers on longer distance services complained that the limited seating capacity of the bendy bus compared to a double-decker resulted in large numbers of people having to stand on journeys of an hour or longer.

The new route 4 introduced as part of the Transport 21 investment would seem to be tailor made for the buses, not only serving long, straight and wide routings, but also newly introduced stretches of Quality Bus Corridor (QBC), while staying away from the narrower and more congested streets that made the operation of the 10 such a problem.

The ultimate success or failure of the latest bendibus venture will be dependent on the willingness of the city authorities to ensure that longer stops and appropriate infrastructure are made available, something that hasn't always happened in the past, according to Dublin bus driver and transport commentator Billy Fleming.

He told *CBW*: "With Transport 21 being strongly emphasised during the launch it remains disappointing to me that once again we see these buses being set to work in an environment which totally fails to cater for their unique people-moving capability.

"We have in Ireland a culture of 'Ah sure, 'n we'll sort it out as we go along' and I venture to suggest that that is what has us in the present chaotic public transport mess.

"We have to remember that the number 4 route is the commencement of a process which is designed to cater for a 60% increase in bus usage in the capital.

"It is the responsibility of the Minister for Transport and his departmental officials to ensure that all aspects of providing this service are attended to rather than the time worn attitude of throwing a few buses out there and seeing what develops."

Nine of the 20 Dublin bendies are required for the new service, and *CBW* understands that plans for the reintroduction of the remainder of the fleet to full service on other suitable routes are being considered.

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PLAXTON

Driver CPC will add new exam

Driving Standards Agency chooses 'Option 2' to comply with Directive

New drivers will have to sit an additional four hours of theory testing to meet European standards, but existing drivers will have a day's training each year for five years.

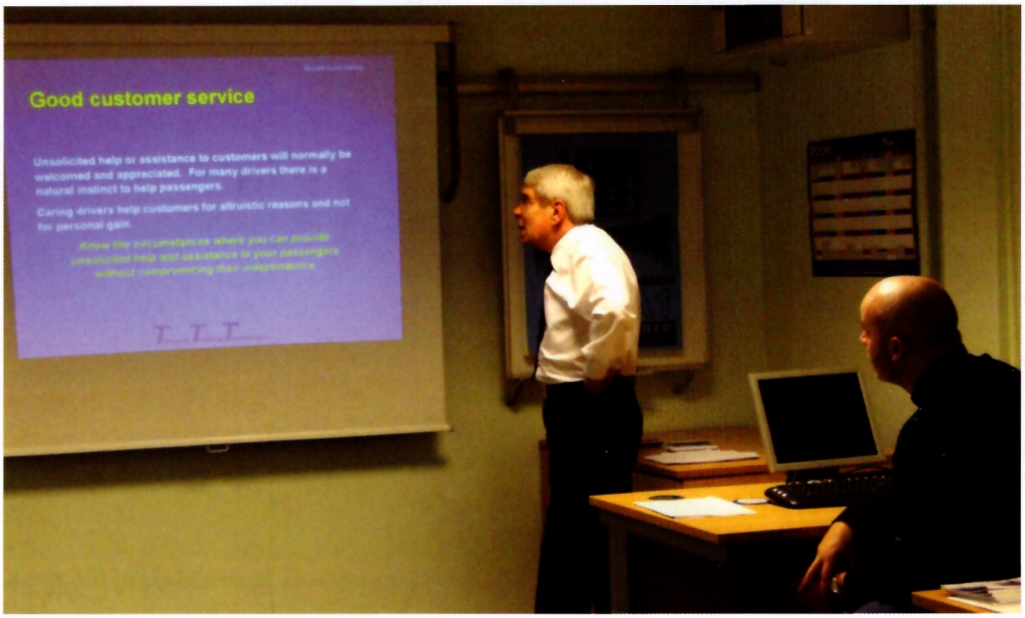
That's the outcome of consultation on the new driver Certificate of Professional Competence, which will start in 2008 for the bus and coach industry. In a concession to the industry, the DSA is phasing in additional theory questions to reduce the impact, and trainees taking National Vocational Training will get three years to qualify, during which they will be able to drive.

To meet the new European Directive, the Driving Standards Agency was faced with two options. Option 1 was that drivers undertake 280 hours of regulated training continually assessed, and Option 2 an additional theory exam and two hours' driving test.

Out of 73 responses to the consultation from both the road haulage sector and PCV industry, 66 said they'd prefer Option 2 and only seven Option 1. Most of the people and trade associations said that the regulated training option was costly and inflexible.

"This is, in the end, a European Directive and carries with it an additional burden for the industry," said a Confederation of Passenger Transport spokesman. "But we agree with the choice of testing as opposed to training, and were only worried that all drivers would have to take the exams up front. The NVQ option provides compromise, and the outcome is as industry-friendly as it can be."

With the additional theory testing comes additional cost. The 35 questions asked in 90 minutes now will rise to 60 questions in April 2007, and 100 questions in April 2008, with pro rata increases in the time allowed. Fees will rise from £21.50 to £32 in 2007, and £45 in April 2008, eventually hitting £75 in September 2008 when the CPC comes into force. The practical test, currently £89 (from April), will go up to £130 by the date of implementation in 2008, when it will become 90 minutes' driving and 30 minutes' vehicle check/documentation testing.



Driver training modules yet to be set for new regulation

Under a forthcoming directive requiring licence renewal (for all PCV drivers) every five years, the DSA was concerned it would be faced with a 'peak' of both the renewal and CPC causing problems. It is now looking at a concession to operate the CPC over an initial period of as little as three years or as long as seven years, depending on the implementation date for the new licence renewal directive.

The DSA is also looking at breaking down the five, seven-hour training periods so that each period becomes a 'module' and training can take place in shorter sessions than seven hours. The sector skills council GoSkills is to look at the elements of training to be included in each module.

What will be covered?

The original European Directive (available to download at *www.dsa.gov.uk/Documents/consult/CPC/CPC_AnnexA.pdf*) explains the purpose of the regulation, and list additional training areas it would like to see covered. Among objectives specific to bus and coach it says:

"Objective: ability to ensure passenger comfort and safety: adjusting longitudinal and sideways movements, road sharing, position on the road, smooth braking, overhang operation, using specific infrastructures (public areas, dedicated lanes), managing conflicts between safe driving and other roles as a driver , interacting with passengers, peculiarities of certain groups of passengers (disabled persons, children).

Objective: ability to load the vehicle with due regard for safety rules and proper vehicle use: forces affecting vehicles in motion, use of gearbox-ratios according to vehicle load and road profile, calculation of payload of vehicle or assembly, load distribution, consequences of overloading the axle, vehicle stability and centre of gravity."

WHAT'S CHANGING

What	Changes	When
Theory test	From 35 questions to 100	April 2008
Length (of theory test)	40 minutes to four hours	Sept 2008
Cost (theory test)	£21.50 to £75	Sept 2008
Driving test	Up to 90 minutes driving/30 minutes documentation test	Sept 2008
Existing drivers	35 hours training every 5 years	By 2013

Exemptions
Section 19 drivers, NVT trainees (for three years)

Willie Pouliart (left) accepts the engraved bowl from John Turton of Carlyle Bus & Coach

Van Hool parts dealership celebrates 20-year partnership

Carlyle Bus & Coach in West Bromwich celebrated a 20-year alliance with Van Hool last week.

The event saw Van Hool's export sales manager Willie Pouliart presented with a limited edition engraved crystal bowl to mark the occasion: "This anniversary marks a significant point in the association between our two companies, and we are delighted to be able to celebrate the event with our colleagues from Van Hool," said Carlyle chairman John Turton.

Mr Turton said the association actually goes back to 1985 when the first parts and service agreement was signed: "Quality, reliability and durability are words long associated with the Van Hool brand, and our search to find vehicles still in service from the 1980s fully bears that out," said Mr Turton. "Not only do they exist, but they do so in large numbers, with many still in regular service."

Over 150 people attended the anniversary celebration, including personnel from Van Hool and Carlyle, the press and a number of operators. The Jubilee Bowl is one of 20 produced to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee by Royal Brierley – a 15 generations old glass company based near Carlyle's West Bromwich HQ.

Depot closure gets Go-Ahead

Go-Ahead's impending closure of operations at Bishop Auckland on April 8 (*CBW* February 9), and the handover of 35 commercial services and contracts to Arriva North East, has been nodded through by the Office of Fair Trading, which does not propose to refer the matter for further investigation.

In a short statement, the OFT said that it "has decided, on the information currently available to it, that a relevant merger situation, under the provisions of the Enterprise Act 2002, has not been created by the anticipated acquisition by Arriva Durham County Ltd of certain services of Go-Ahead Group Plc in Bishop Auckland."

Go-Ahead acquired operations in Bishop Auckland, with the takeover of OK Motor Services in 1995, but Arriva was the incumbent operator, and although very few services competed head to head, the viability of GNE services has been hit by rising costs and the need to replace its dilapidated depot.

All driving staff and most engineering staff are being offered alternative employment, either with Arriva under full TUPE regulations, or at GNE's Chester-le-Street depot. Some of the administrative staff, and some engineering staff will be made redundant, with current estimates suggesting less than a dozen redundancies in total.

Mildenhall in Suffolk opened its new bus station last week. The £360,000 building was inspired by the town's famous Market Cross, with its 'Falzinc' leaded roof. The building was designed by architects The Johns Practice and built by Godfrey & Hicks Builders.

Briefly

Customs and Excise is reassuring operators anxious about vehicles being impounded for fitting anti-theft devices on fuel fillers. Another commercial vehicle magazine reported a reader had a vehicle impounded after Customs were unable to obtain a fuel sample because of the anti-theft device. But HMRC tells *CBW* readers not to worry; if it wanted to obtain a fuel sample it would get it via the fuel pump, or take a mechanic with them to disconnect the device.

An Arriva bus driver collapsed and died at the wheel of his bus as he drove an empty relief vehicle to relieve another bus which had broken down. Richard Maitland (60) suffered a heart attack seconds after pulling over behind the broken-down bus. Despite attempts by colleagues and members of the public to revive him, he died at the scene. Mr. Maitland had worked for Arriva for six years. He leaves a wife and four children.

A father's fight to save a rural bus service that takes his baby daughter to hospital for cystic fibrosis treatment, has reached a local authority's council chamber. Michael Wood, of Uppingham, Rutland, says he has no way of getting his six-month-old-son, Liam, to hospital for vital treatment, without the service run by Peter James Coaches. The service is under threat because of local authority predicted shortfalls in rural bus grants.

All drivers working for Bournemouth's Yellow Buses are to be issued with DNA testing kits to help catch customers who spit at staff. The sample can then be analysed and compared with records on the national DNA database. Chief operating officer Derek Lott said: "Thankfully, incidents involving spitting are few and far between but, as far as I am concerned, one incident is too many. We will not tolerate such behaviour. Our staff deserve, and will get, the company's full support in tackling this issue."

TOUR

How to pass coaching with honours in Oxford

University city gives coach parking details

Operators who visit Oxford will be pleased to learn that the city of dreaming spires has launched a new fact sheet for the coach industry.

It may no longer be the city of aquatint of Evelyn Waugh's time, but the country's premier university has much to recommend it to coach groups. To get the best out of a visit, operators and drivers should follow the rules and regulations as laid down in the 2006 publication.

The itinerary provides suggestions for tailor-made tours to the city, together with details of coach parking and set-down and pick-up points. It also provides detailed maps of the main coach routes within the city.

Drivers are encouraged to set down and pick up passengers at Oxpens Coach Park, Norfolk Street and Beaumont Street. There is additional coach parking at Ferry Hinksey Road PSV and the Pear Tree service area.

Oxpens Coach Park, in Oxpens Road, has a capacity of 34 vehicles and there is a maximum parking time of 24 hours. The tariff is £5, payable in £1 coins, and the park is a 10-minute walk from the city centre. Ferry Hinksey Road PSV, which is off Botley Road, has a capacity of 10 vehicles. Parking is free for a maximum of two hours and there is no return within the hour. There is a regular bus service to the city centre.

The service area at the Pear Tree Roundabout, which is at the junction of the A34 and A44, has a capacity of 10 coaches. There is a maximum stay of 24 hours and the charge is £10, with the first hour being free. Pay at the Little Chef restaurant. There is a regular park & ride service to the city centre, which takes about 20 minutes.

Coach parking or waiting on the street is not allowed at other locations in the city centre. Drivers accompanied by a guide who wish to be picked up anywhere other than the coach park should ask the guide to call them when the whole group has assembled and is ready to re-embark.

Coaches can set down and pick up passengers in Norfolk Street and Beaumont Street but no waiting is allowed at either of these points.

Coaches are free to move around the city using the Through Route marked in yellow on the map in the leaflet. The Through Route includes St Giles, Beaumont Street, Hythe Bridge Street, Hollybush Row, Oxpens Road and Thames Street. The Through Route may be followed in either direction.

Should they need to do so, visitor coaches are also permitted to enter the streets listed below, observing the appropriate restrictions:

- Speedwell Street: entry only via Thames Street, all vehicles, except local buses, must turn left after crossing Folly Bridge.
- Norfolk Street: one way; entry from Oxpens Road/Thames Street exiting via Old Greyfriars Street.

Coaches may not enter other streets in the city centre without an access permit for setting down or picking up at specific named venues that are being visited by their passengers. Permits may be issued only where considerable difficulty or hardship would otherwise ensue. Apply in writing to the manager, Parking Shop, 140 High Street, Oxford OX1 4DN, or by fax on 01865 252695, or by e-mail to *cashiers@oxford.gov.uk*. Applications should be received seven days prior to the visit.

- More information from Visit Oxford on 01865 726871 or go to *www.visitoxford.org*

Dreaming spires: the new guide (below) will make it easier to get the best out of Oxford Photograph: Kingpin Media

Make a date at the palace

LHTS, the leading London specialist, is by way of royal appointment offering group packages to tour Buckingham Palace.

The 19 lavishly furnished staterooms, used extensively by the Queen and members of the Royal Family to receive and entertain guests on state, ceremonial and official occasions, form the heart of the working palace and are open to the general public from July 31 to September 24.

Coach groups are offered overnight packages from £40 per person, which includes overnight accommodation in a four-star central London hotel on a Sunday evening and entrance to Buckingham Palace. Overnight packages booked on other days of the week will cost from £47 per person.

- For bookings and more information, contact Rachel at LHTS on 020 7233 5322 (fax 020 7233 5250) or email *rachel@lhts.com*

Buckingham Palace: fit for a Queen

King-sized service to Amsterdam

Operators wanting to book trips to northern Europe will be able to book by royal appointment now that DFDS Seaways has introduced the King of Scandinavia on its Newcastle to Ijmuiden route.

DFDS claims that The King of Scandinavia is the best ship to cruise from Newcastle on a scheduled service. It measures 166 metres from prow to stern and will operate daily services alongside the Queen of Scandinavia. Capacity on the route has now been increased dramatically and it offers operators a wider choice of mini cruise and short break options to Belgium, Holland and Northern Germany.

Onboard facilities include four restaurants, two cinemas, a sports bar and live entertainment in the Columbus Club. Cabins range from the standard to the Commodore Deluxe, which have televisions, minibars and fresh fruit.

John Crummie, managing director of DFDS Seaways, said: "We are very excited about the arrival of the King of Scandinavia. This is a big investment and demonstrates our confidence in the market.

"We appeal to a discerning audience and we recognise the need to consistently upgrade and expand our on-board services to provide the best possible experience."

■ For more information call 08705 333 111 or go to *www.dfds.co.uk*

Top attractions record decline in numbers

Confirmation that last year was difficult for the tourist industry has been underlined by figures from the Office of National Statistics which show that some of the UK's top attractions saw a decline in visitor numbers.

The bomb attacks in London in July had a pronounced effect on some of the capital's major attractions, with the National Gallery attracting 4.2 million visitors, a 15% drop on the previous year.

The London Eye and Tate Modern both recorded a 12% drop in numbers. The Tower of London attracted 1.9 million visitors - down 9.7% - but the trend was bucked by Kew Gardens drawing 1.5 million people, which was a rise of 25.6% on 2004 figures.

Outside of London, Blackpool Pleasure Beach remained the top visitor attraction, although the numbers were down by just over 3% to 5.97 million. The celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar gave a boost to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, which recorded a 22.4% rise in visitor numbers.

Tom Wright, the chief executive of VisitBritain, said: "Some of London's attractions certainly faced a difficult summer last year as the attacks in July dampened domestic tourism particularly."

Tate Modern recorded a 12% drop in visitor numbers last year

Events

■ **March 23: North West Bus Summit, The Centre, Birchwood Park, Warrington. *www.nwda.co.uk*, or call Nigel Featham, 01925 634296**

■ **April 4: London Transport Awards Dinner, London Hilton. 01224 263134**

■ **April 5: Getting Active, Getting There – making the links between transport and health. Conference. Bull Hotel, Peterborough. *conferences@landor.co.uk*, 0845 270 7965**

■ **April 6-7: 30th UK Transport Conference and Exhibition: 'Wasted Miles, Wasted Money'. University of Nottingham. 01223 881622 or *annchapman@CICC-conferences.org.uk***

■ **April 7-9: Coach Tourism Council/ Bonded Coach Holidays Conference 2006, Llandudno, North Wales. 0870 850 2839 or email *admin@coachtourismcouncil.co.uk***

■ **April 22-23: UK Coach Rally, Brighton, 01753 631170**

■ **April 24-26: CPT Scotland Annual Conference, Gleneagles. Gail Hume 0131 272 2150, email: *gailhume@cpt-uk.freeserve.co.uk***

■ **April 25/27: CV Show, NEC, Birmingham. *www.cvshow.com***

■ **May 4: Employee Motivation and Incentives, conference, CBI Conference Centre, London. *www.symposium-events.co.uk***

■ **May 8-10: ALBUM Conference, Cardiff. Karen Stafford-Smith 029 2078 7700.**

■ **May 9-13: Motortec automotive show, IFEMA, Madrid, Spain. *www.motorteconline.com*, +34 91 722 3000**

■ **May 11: DDA 2005 and Public Transport: Myth and Reality, conference, Sadlers Wells, London. Book online at *www.thewaterfront.co.uk***

Open platform

By Robin Littlewood

A high price to pay?

Some of you may recall a fine upstanding stalwart of a gentlemen who used to write for *CBW* under the name of Marksman.

He was known particularly for his regular advice toward pricing in this ever changing industry of ours.

Personally, based on the fact that you have to start somewhere, the suggestions were profound, whereas in reality they, in my opinion, were not attainable in the greater number of cases.

I say this quite emphatically, because though new coaches, and indeed second hand ones too, are within reason comparable in price wherever you go, overheads are not!

A great and valued friend, Peter Dawson in Chesterfield once exhibited a wry smile on looking at one of 'Marksman's Costing Tables' and clearly said: "We can't possibly get those rates here." And yet coincidentally 'Marksman' was only a few miles away in Mansfield!

You see in my considered view there are essentially three options. One: What your diary tells you. How much work have you got in for a particular day?

Two: Based on experience, and possibly knowing the client, how much in terms of price can you expect?

Three: Where are you based? That is important to the overall scenario, because Keith Payne at Redwing is unquestionably going to be paying much higher overall rates in Central London versus a lot of operators who are out in the sticks, and I do not refer to that just in terms of wages either.

I am not a subscriber, nor have I ever been, to the view that if you are not attaining the price that you essentially had hoped for, that it is as well to leave the vehicle standing. You still have paid tax, insurance, etc. You will still have to pay your driver's wages. You will still have depreciation going on in the vehicle.

Obviously, you are not literally going to give it away, but cash flow is vital to survival, and as they say here providing you use your grey matter, 'summat is better than nowt'.

I hope CBW can address this business of pricing in much more detail in future Open Platforms, possibly by region, and if I may say so, I feel that as a broker I am well placed to do so, because my company deals and trades with coach operators from Aberdeen to Penzance and Holyhead to Hull and variation is astounding.

I wrote this initial contribution as I wish to prove a point. A prospective customer asked recently if we could locate an executive double-deck coach for a wedding party from Barnsley to an area not far from Pontefract.

Needless to say, as is always the case, it was for the ever-faithful Saturday - not particularly peak season by a long straw, but nonetheless in the early spring. The work was harassed by the requirement of what I shall call a 'take and return' out from the church ceremony circa 1400hrs to the reception and back at midnight.

To start with, you know, and I know that when you look at it, who wants the job in the first place?

However, ladies and gentlemen, my upbringing in the former National Bus Group was that you never turn work away, so we made two enquiries to operators who we knew had the requisite vehicles.

One was in north Nottinghamshire (just) and one in South Yorkshire but some distance from the pickup point in Barnsley. In terms of 'dead mileage' both operators had the same distance to travel, or such that it was neither here or there.

It must also be remembered, that as I have said, it is likely that one or the other of these operators didn't want the job in the first place, but not deterred one quoted £500 and the other £300.

Now, irrespective of personal preferences, and a host of other things that possibly could enter the equation, how can there be a difference of £200?

Vehicle age profile was similar. Mileage was similar. Alternatively, why don't we be honest with people, and even if we tell a white lie say: "I'm sorry, but we are fully booked that day, and we cannot help you, but thanks for calling anyway, maybe next time?" Or be totally upfront, and whatever your reason, just say: "Sorry, no."

It's like doing budgets for these accountants and bank managers. We all know what we want to make, but getting it is another story, ain't it?

Robin Littlewood runs Demauris Associates, which contracts coach operators. If you'd like to follow in his footsteps and have your say in Open Platform, email *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to Open Platform, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE...

Biofuels uncovered

Everything you ever wanted to know about alternative fuels but didn't know who to ask PLUS NeoMAN UK MD Vince Welsh tells us why he's in such a good mood

Send your letters to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk*, fax 0845 2802927 or write to: Inbox, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Having been involved with transport glass for over 30 years, I read with considerable interest your editorial about glass versus plastic in *CBW*, March 15.

The issues you raise have been known and of concern, in some aspects, to the glass suppliers for some time. However, I would like to point out that the 'glass' is not the only factor at play.

Glass with its rigidity and strength has been designed as part of the construction strength of the vehicle build, where it is been 'bonded in' as in car production. To resist 'ejection' in particular accident scenarios, laminated glass for the inner pane of insulating glass units is an alternative to the usual toughened glass. The outer pane remains toughened glass for its strength.

However, there is a cost implication which has not been attractive. But more importantly the glass (and any other glazing material) will only work if the glazing system and vehicle construction are suitably designed to retain the glass in an accident. These latter considerations also have cost implications.

As for *'the massive weight of double glazing...'* the implication is that insulating glass units have a far greater weight pro rata than single glazing. Obviously two pieces of glass weigh twice as much as one but 4mm glass only weighs 10kg per sq metre.

Yes there are other glazing materials available, from acrylics to polycarbonates, but perhaps the one major deciding factor is cost and possibly more pertinent, whole-life cost, not just of the glazing material but all the other factors that come into play relevant to the chosen material.

It is also worth remembering that the majority of cars (from five-seats to eight) are also glazed with toughened glass to the sides and rear, with laminated only in the windscreen, but the number of ejections in accidents is few. The reason? Seatbelts.

Chris Hogg
Scratby, Norfolk

***CBW* editor Mark Williams says: Thanks for a fascinating insight. But at 10kg per square metre, you'd be looking at 430kg for a double-glazed 14-metre coach – or are my calculations awry? Seatbelts prevent ejection, but when the glass breaks on a coach which has rolled, those passenger nearest the open window aperture are exposed to the ground.**

CORGI

WIN A BUS! Sort of... Drop us a line and if your letter is chosen as our Letter of the Week, you'll receive a top-notch coach or bus model courtesy of our friends at Corgi. Please try to keep your letters under 200 words. The editor's decision is final.

Kent council clarifications

I refer to your March 15 article (CPT to meet with Kent council) and wish to correct the statement that "it has been announced that Kent CC's passenger transport manager, Julia Seaward... is to take early retirement at the end of April."

I have, in fact, tendered my resignation to Kent County Council with effect from the end of April.

Julia Seaward
Head of transport, Kent County Council

I refer to your article of March 15 (CPT to meet with Kent council) . You say that "it is believed the tendered bus services manager Mike Hodges is to be made redundant".

This is incorrect and I am retiring at the end of April, following my 60th birthday.

Mike Hodges
Senior public transport planner, Kent County Council

***CBW* says: We are happy to clarify the matter. As we said in the article, we could not get the information at the time. Please accept our apologies**

Spotted

Jim Winkley photographed this British ex-demonstration bus in Segovia, Spain. Now that's what we call a serious paintjob. Send your snaps to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.*

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Too much information?

You could be breaking the Data Protection Act without even realising it

Anna West

How often do you clear out your files? If the answer is 'rarely' or 'never', you could be breaching the Data Protection Act (DPA). The DPA governs how you should deal with all the personal information you hold (for example, information about employees and job candidates) and includes requirements to keep records up to date, and only to keep the details you need.

Personal information means any information relating to a living person, and includes expressions of opinion (for example, appraisal notes commenting on an employee's performance). If you hold sensitive personal information, stricter rules apply to your handling of this.

A code of practice, called the Employment Practices Data Protection Code, aims to help organisations comply with the DPA in relation to their employees, ex-employees and job candidates.

The code sets out best practice in four areas: recruitment; employment records; employee monitoring and information about employees' health. These are the code's key recommendations.

Anna West is an employment lawyer with City solicitors, Travers Smith.

Recruitment

On your application forms, the code suggests that you:

- Only request personal information relevant to the recruitment decision
- Remove questions which are only relevant to people you employ but not to unsuccessful candidates (eg banking details)
- When requesting information about a candidate's criminal convictions, make it clear that spent convictions do not have to be declared.

If you want to verify information provided by a candidate you should:

- Explain what information will be verified and how (eg by contacting course providers)
- Obtain signed consent from the candidate (unless the person you are contacting is a referee the candidate has given)

Individuals are entitled to see, on request, copies of personal information you are holding about them (subject to certain exceptions). This would include notes you take at interview - so be careful what you write.

Employment records

Although you do not generally need an employee's consent to keep records, your employees should know what you are keeping and why.

You could achieve this with a policy, or an appropriate statement in the employment contract.

The code recommends various steps in relation to keeping records, including:

- Keep personal information secure, and make sure it can only be accessed by someone who has a legitimate reason to see it - it should not be generally available to all staff
- Information about an employee's ethnic origin, disability, religion or sexual orientation, for equal opportunities monitoring, should only be obtained and kept with the employee's consent, and should usually be anonymised
- Delete information which is no longer relevant - in particular, after an employee leaves you should retain their records for only as long as you need.

Monitoring

There are many different types of monitoring, for example installing a hidden camera to catch a thief, CCTV cameras to see if staff are meeting health and safety requirements, or regular checking of websites visited by employees.

> Individuals are entitled to see, on request, copies of personal information you are holding about them

The code suggests that you:

- Consider, before introducing monitoring, why it is needed, the impact on employees, and whether there is any alternative
- Only monitor as far as is necessary (eg only install CCTV in the areas you really need it)
- Tell your employees what monitoring you are carrying out and why, unless you can justify covert monitoring (eg in the case of suspected theft)
- Avoid monitoring in areas where employees would expect privacy, such as toilets, unless you suspect serious crime.

Health information

Information about an employee's health is sensitive personal information, so more stringent rules apply. The code recommends that you only collect health information that you really need. If you use a pre-employment medical questionnaire, make sure the questions are clearly relevant to the employee's ability to do the job.

In some situations, you might want an employee to undergo a medical examination, for example in cases of long-term or frequent sickness absences.

As well as obtaining the employee's consent, the code recommends that you consider whether the examination is genuinely necessary and why.

Any health information you hold should be kept securely, and the code suggests you:

- ideally, separate it from other personnel information
- limit the people who have access to the information
- ensure that anyone who does see it only sees the parts they need to.

You can find out more about the DPA, and see a full copy of the code at *www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk*

Meet... Philip Brown

The senior traffic commissioner discusses his role and duties with *CBW*'s Richard Simpson. The system works, he says...

Richard Simpson is a freelance journalist who has specialised in the transport industry for 20 years

After three years – almost to the day – as Britain's senior traffic commissioner, Philip Brown is resigned to the fact that many people in the industry don't understand the role of the TC, what it means to be called to a public inquiry, or what the powers and purpose of such an inquiry are.

Like all traffic commissioners, he was appointed to his position by the Secretary of State for Transport. At the time of Mr Brown's appointment, that person was Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott.

"Our role is as independent regulators. That means we are independent of the Department for Transport and independent of VOSA," Brown explains.

"We come from wide-ranging backgrounds but we all have expertise in the world of law, courts or tribunals, or a relevant industry background. Of the current seven TCs: four are lawyers, two are from the transport industry and one is a career army officer with experience of logistics.

"For myself, until 20 years ago I was a solicitor working in magistrates courts in various parts of the country.

"After that I was working in continuing legal education at a university in what would now be recognised as Lifelong Learning.

"I was appointed as a part-time Deputy TC in the Eastern Area in 1990 and then successfully applied for the post as full-time TC for the Western Area six years ago.

"What is as surprising now as it was then is that a certain proportion of the people who are called before me don't realise that I operate as a single-person tribunal; a public inquiry is not a meeting for a coffee and a chat.

"As the regulator for road-based public transport, I am faced with two main issues.

"The first is that I actually operate in a promotional role: my job is to ensure that buses and coaches do provide a proper service for the public. Operators must be on time and provide vehicles which are fit to run and which will encourage the public to travel.

"The other issue is trying to ensure that there is a system which brings non-compliant operators to inquiry in an effective manner.

"To do this, I need accurate and timely information, and this is sometimes delayed by the judicial process. If it is a criminal matter, then VOSA has to decide whether to prosecute first in a criminal court or go straight to a public inquiry.

> **Just in the last week I have found five new pieces of legislation, statutory instrument or case law which will impact on operators**

"If the first course is taken, then the public inquiry usually has to wait until the conclusion of the judicial process. At least then the verdict in effect gives us the facts for the inquiry. If there are no criminal proceedings and the allegation is denied, then the traffic commissioner has to consider evidence from both sides and make a finding."

Brown is sympathetic to the feeling in the PCV industry that operators are slowly sinking beneath a flood of legislation.

"This is not a realistic wish, but I would like to see an overhaul of the legislation to bring it into line with that for goods vehicles and all consolidated into one legislative form.

"Even I have difficulties keeping up with all the changes in regulation. Just in the last week I have found five new pieces of legislation, statutory instrument or case law which will impact on operators."

But that's not the only way in which Brown keeps up with industry trends.

"I am a regular user of buses in Bristol, and there are various routes I can take into work. On one occasion I overheard two ladies complaining bitterly about the service on one particular route and that there was no-one to complain to. I gave them a business card, and told them to complain to me!

"On a more formal basis, much of our role is dependent upon what government says it is. If, for example, we had a national role over the Passenger Transport Executives and similar bodies to ensure reliable bus services, that would enhance our role and enable us to bring greater influences to bear.

"Also if the decision was made to decriminalise certain offences, we'd be able to shorten the process when an operator or driver did break the rules and remove the feeling they have that they are being tried twice.

"We could and should have a wider role: for example I sometimes see LEAs letting schools contracts to certain operators, and wonder if that work has been won purely on price. Are the operators concerned winning because

they are cheap, or because they are safe?"

As far as bus operators are concerned, Brown finds enforcing the requirement to run reliable services one of the most difficult areas.

"I would like operators to have to provide information on service reliability as a matter of routine, so we can make a fully-informed decision. Currently there is no provision for operators of regular services to hand over records of what was actually operated.

"I would like a similar system to that on the railways, where operators have to report on their performance as a matter of course. We could use the bus compliance officers, who currently have to put their anoraks on and go out with their clipboards, to analyse the data, which could easily be downloaded from ticket machines."

Brown clearly has a dislike of what might be regarded as bad law, but how much say does he have in drawing up the legislation on the industries which he regulates?

"Lawmakers do consult with us, just as they do with the industry and the enforcement agencies. Sometimes they listen, but they have a different viewpoint and ultimately they have to get legislation past the Ministers and then Parliament.

"We're not consulted directly by Brussels on issues such as digital tachos and the Working Time Directive (WTD). Those EU issues are decided at such a rarefied level.

"Enforcement on those two issues in particular is a matter for VOSA. At the moment they appear to be educating rather than enforcing. I've seen no cases relating to either digital tachos or the WTD yet."

What message does Brown have for those who see him as presiding over a court where he is prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner?

"I think people forget that we are not there to prosecute them. It's an inquiry, which means that we are there to ask questions. It also means the operators have a chance to explain things from their side.

A public inquiry is not a meeting for a coffee and a chat

"Our system is 75 years old, and it actually gives the opportunity to the operator to speak; something you don't get in other European countries where licences are revoked by unaccountable civil servants.

"I am a tribunal judge, and I have to give a reason for my decision. To anyone appearing in front of me, I would say I am not here to punish you, I am here to consider whether action has to be taken against your licence in a balanced and reasonable judicial decision.

"If you don't think I have taken account of the facts or I have got the law wrong, then you can appeal to the Transport Tribunal; and then on to ›

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VEN017

Philip Brown with Moir Lockhead, chief executive of First Group

the Court of Appeal. It's a proper legal process."

Traffic commissioners have far more flexibility in the sanctions they impose than do magistrates, for example.

"One person's non-compliance can be very different from another, and vehicle prohibitions can be different. For obvious reasons, those involving tyres and brakes tend to get taken most seriously. There is general guidance, but you have to use judicial discretion. The ultimate sanction is to end the licence – a question I ask myself is 'does this operator deserve to be put out of business?'

"The decision you make has to be proportionate to the facts as you find them."

And here Brown has some advice which anyone who is called to a PI would do well to heed.

"You have to take the operator as he or she is on the day of the public inquiry, not the day the vehicle examiners visited. There's usually a month or so before the inquiry which the operator can, and should, use to put procedures in place which can be presented to the TC to show that the issues originally raised have been addressed.

"The TC will also ask what impact the decision which she or he may take will have on the business, so there should be nothing arbitrary about the decision."

> **In other European countries, licences are revoked by unaccountable civil servants**

> **I would like a similar system to that on the railways, where operators have to report on their performance as a matter of course**

But it's best not to find yourself in this situation at all. What's the best way to make sure you don't get to meet your local TC any time soon?

"Two words: be compliant. Know what you are supposed to do and do it. Ask VOSA, look on the web site or get professional advice.

"In my experience some operators simply outgrow their ability to cope: their infrastructure, such as workshops, doesn't grow in line with the fleet. On-line applications make it very easy to expand an operation, but many operators need to ask whether they should then contract-out certain functions of the business such as vehicle maintenance."

Has Brown noticed any trend for the bus industry to become more or less compliant as it has consolidated into the form it is in today?

"As the companies become bigger they should become more compliant, but staff still need to do their jobs properly, especially regarding maintenance."

And what about the considerably more fragmented coach side?

"Those operators which have been able to grow and ensure compliance have improved. We're now at a stage where some small operators need to think whether they should still be in business – if they want to stay in the industry, then they have a lot of work to do.

"The most difficult decisions I have to make are in cases where action will mean taking an entire town's buses off the road. I've always made local authorities aware of a pending decision to take buses off the road unless reliability is found to have improved."

As well as holding operators' licences in his hand, Brown and his fellow TCs also have to decide whether individuals are fit people to hold PCV driving licences.

It surprises him that there is no exemption from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act as far as PCV licence holders are concerned. "I recently had a case where the only reason I knew that someone applying to renew a licence had got life for murder was because he told me."

Brown shares the frustration of operators who find they are unable to run to timetable because of traffic congestion, but still will not hesitate to take action against them.

"At the end of the day it is their timetable and their problem. Routine congestion is not an excuse, but an operator can be given credit where delays are unexpected. They must be prepared to amend the timetable."

Finally, it's worth noting that Brown had no burning desire to end up being the senior regulator in the road transport industry.

"I have absolutely no idea what I would be if I wasn't the senior traffic commissioner. I didn't plan it as a career. But I do know I'd be doing something in the legal world."

CV
Philip Brown

1990
Deputy traffic commissioner, Eastern Area

2000
Traffic commissioner, Western Traffic Area

2003
Senior traffic commissioner

Previous occupations:
Solicitor in magistrates courts
Worked in continuing legal education

PART ONE

Make your adverts work

In the first of a new series, Paul Clapham sheds some light on the murky world of advertising. It's not what you spend, he says, but where you spend it...

The chairman of Unilever once said: "50% of my advertising spend is wasted - I just don't know which 50%".

If this worried the boss of a massive, corporate company,. operators - with much less leeway for error - ought to be paranoid about it. Whichever marketing technique you use, you most certainly can't afford to waste money on poor advertising.

At the same time, you can't expect to grow without investing in your business. Another famous quote says: "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a pretty girl in the dark - you know what you're doing but nobody else does." And we've all seen the the advert saying: "Something happens when you don't advertise. Nothing."

So how do you get effectiveness for the money you commit? And how do you know where to commit that money in the first place?

Judging how effective your marketing spend has been doesn't start at the back end. It begins up-front.

Before you spend a single penny, you should have a plan. You should only spend money once you've established what you want to achieve. That aim should of course be realistic, but, where advertising is concerned, you should expect the media suppliers to help you. What happened last time? Who can you talk to for confirmation? These are valid questions to a salesman. If he can't or won't answer, why should you buy?

Enquiries, not sales first

The first thing therefore to achieve is a set of numbers. "I want X enquiries; I am willing to spend Y pounds to get them". With this in place, you have the basis for evaluation. Note well that I have said "enquiries". Your marketing activity can only deliver enquiries; sales come from how you approach those enquiries.

The second part of the plan that enables you to assess the effectiveness of your spend, then, is an internal system for turning enquirers into customers. Getting this bit wrong is a classic error in which even the biggest and most successful businesses fail. It amazes me daily how few companies will spend money putting together a structure for exploiting enquiries properly.

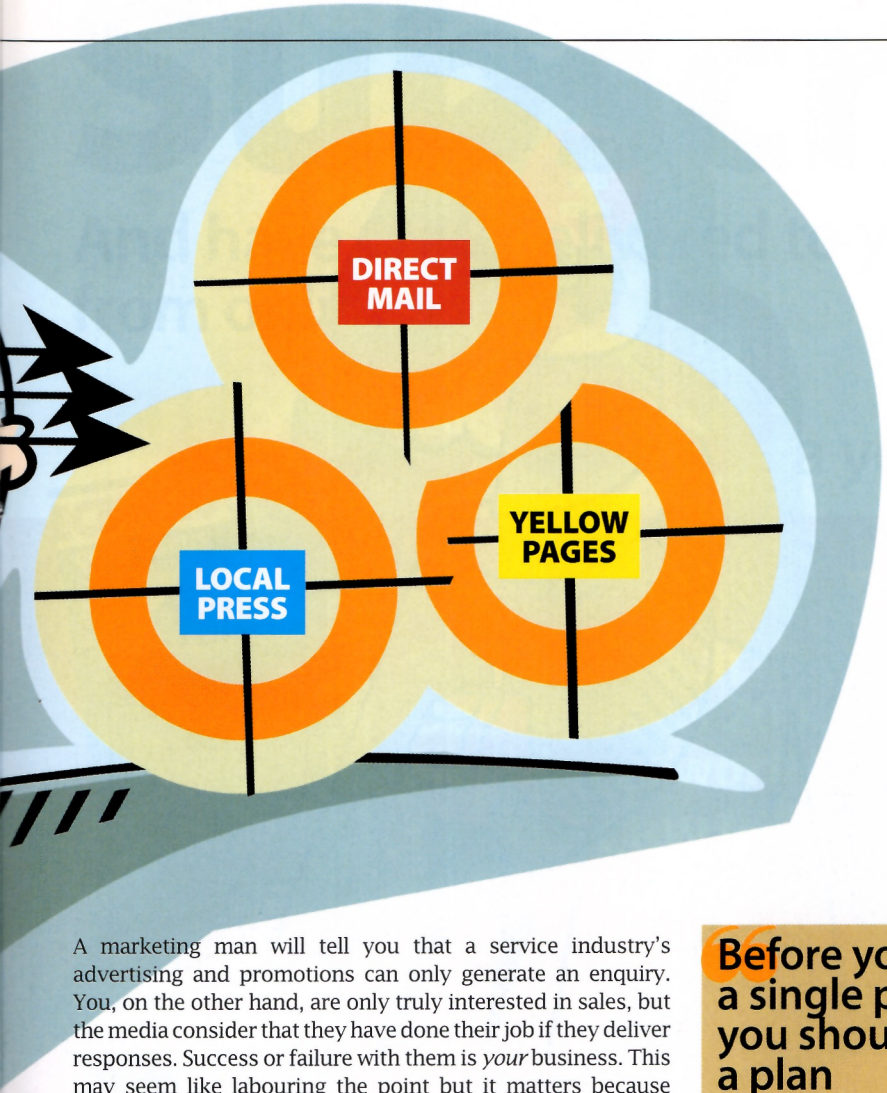
If enquiries come by phone, do you ask where they got your name? Every time? What about your staff? If you don't enforce this discipline, you'll never be able to make a proper judgement of advertising effectiveness. You must ask, and you must insist that your staff do, too. Enquirers seldom proffer this information and it is a mark of professionalism to ask.

> "A letter or leaflet sent to a company without a named individual is virtually an instant bin-liner"

Where it came from is only part of the battle. What you do with it is equally part of the assessment of value. Again this is part of the initial plan. Aim to have a standard reaction. For example: a quote on the phone confirmed by fax within an hour. Aim to send out a brochure/sample same day. Have such action plans written down, indeed written up on the wall for all (including customers) to see. The point here is that if your competitors work a same hour response system and you work same day, you're wasting enquiries. You're probably better, but your prospective customer only sees slow.

Let's assume you've put together a red-hot response system, do you have a recording system to go with it? Scrap paper is not the answer. Use a proper computer database, for all customers, preferably right at the point of enquiry, wherever that may be. Again, until you have collated the necessary information relating to the enquiries received, you cannot estimate the value of the marketing methods used to achieve them.

Let's address this whole issue of enquiries against sales.



A marketing man will tell you that a service industry's advertising and promotions can only generate an enquiry. You, on the other hand, are only truly interested in sales, but the media consider that they have done their job if they deliver responses. Success or failure with them is *your* business. This may seem like labouring the point but it matters because enquiries from different sources will have different values.

Consider two examples. First up is good old Yellow Pages. Anyone in coach hire should be in Yellow Pages and probably not just their local book. However, you know for a fact that anyone who finds you this way will almost certainly have found several competitors. Instantly the value of the enquiry reduces, because your chances of winning every competitive quote are slim. The same applies to other directories. They're a good source of enquiries because everyone reading them is buying, but you should be aware of the competitive pressures.

Conversely, the same amount spent advertising in say your local evening paper will produce fewer responses, but they are unlikely to be competitive, so more valuable.

I suggest that the main marketing techniques relevant to coach hire and tour sales are those below. How effective they are for you depends on best use of each as follows.

Direct mail

Direct mail is the most cost effective way to reach businesses and holidaymakers, but doing it properly requires some hard graft. If you think it's just a matter of sending out mailers and waiting for enquiries to flood in you're going to be disappointed.

First, you need to get together a list of the right contacts. A letter or leaflet sent to a company without a named individual is virtually an instant bin-liner. So you call first. Even if you've got a list it will need updating - people move, get fired, change jobs.

Next you follow up mailers. Without follow up you can expect maybe 1% response, with it you can look at 10%. When you follow up you need a hook to hang the conversation on so some sort of introductory offer is indicated. This also makes it easier to do the follow up.

Realistically, you can't expect more than 1% to 2% to be interested at the point when you mail them. This is where your database comes back into the game. It enables you to note, for example, when the customer is likely to hire: events, sales conferences and sporting events are classic triggers. Pulling this information together can make your mailing activity effective for the whole year, but you must record it religiously and use it, too.

A great benefit of mailing is that you control it: you can send out 100 mailers, or 10 per week. If it's a roaring success you can extend the activity. If it bombs, you can stop, or at least change the message.

Press Advertising

Generalising about the press is dangerous but there are certain points to make. First, do your corporate customers read the local press? More important, do they buy for their businesses from it? In a lot of cases, the answer is no. Some have good business sections but not many. The regional morning newspapers can be a better deal, because they are more business-orientated. However, they are few and far between.

If you're after tour and excursion customers, do you know which paper they read? You might get a good price from a weekly free newspaper, but will it be noticed? Ask your existing customers what they read on your end-of-tour questionnaire (and you MUST do this, with a free day trip to incentivise a response, perhaps).

> **"Before you spend a single penny, you should have a plan"**

Since you can't know in advance when customers might buy, you virtually have to appear every week, perhaps avoiding the school holidays. That can make it expensive, or limits you to a small space, or both.

As a principle, bigger and better spaces deliver better results. Front page slots are twice standard rates and justify it. The trouble is, the slots are rarely available. Definitely worth asking though. Back page and next to TV listings are similarly higher priced because they get more readers. Back page is good because it's the sports page and readers are members of clubs. Selective use of the back page at the beginning of the seasons and prior to touring seasons will achieve the right audience.

Getting the most out of Yellow Pages

First, take advertising space. Your competitors do and a linage entry gets lost. Second be aware of how people use Yellow Pages. They use Yellow Pages because they don't know anyone in your business and they want someone local.

This means your ad can win you a lot of business. Tell them what you do and why they should buy from you. Offer special deals, quote your lowest price, get the word 'free' into the ad... free consultation, free personal visits, that kind of thing.

Location can be important. If you are in, say, the Bristol book, customers will regard location as less important. If you're in the Gloucestershire book, covering hundreds of square miles, location is vital so make the town big. In large cities the same applies to postal area.

Don't limit yourself to one book. Despite the point above about local supply, you may be next to an area that's ill-provided with operators. A good proposition on price and quality will beat the distance factor for good customers. ›

Boost your business

PART ONE

Promotions

If you've got a travel agency you should have a constant promotional presence in the window and the shop for your coach hire.

Some of this can be aimed at the business community, some at Joe Public. For the former you could stress your groups handling ability and venue booking service. For the latter you've got Valentine's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, and of course that 'last few seats' message.

Remember, People like Promotions. They feel they're getting something for nothing and that makes them feel clever. So, Free, Win and Save are key words to use. (This applies in every marketing activity). Buy two, get one free; £5 off this month; buy tour x, get excursion y free. These are easy to do. Competitions and draws are a little more complicated but cost very little.

The key virtue of promotions is to give the prospective customer a simple, solid reason to buy from you, and to buy now. In many cases your customers don't know how to distinguish between your product or service and a competitor's. But they do understand free extra product because they like that deal when they see it in their local Tesco.

Press and public relations

A fraught subject. I doubt there's a business in the country that thinks that they get a fair crack of the PR whip (even Mr Branson gets kicked for his trains as often as he gets praised for his balloons).

The virtues of PR-led marketing are several. Assuming you do it yourself, it costs you nothing. Editorial is better read than advertising. One activity can get you an awful lot of space for your time.

The problems are also numerous: you have to have a story, not just a puff. To do it properly is far more time-consuming than people imagine. Surprisingly few people can write good copy for newspapers. Above all, does it reach your target customer?

> **If a charity's minibus gets vandalised, give them yours for a day – and let everyone know that's what you're doing**

Nevertheless, be PR aware. If a charity's minibus gets vandalised, give them yours for a day - and let everyone know that's what you're doing. This is a press-friendly story and everyone gains. (Be prepared for a flood of begging letters though).

Make the most of loss-leaders. Tourism attractions have loss-leaders, and when they do, take advantage - but don't tell the customer you've done it 'on the cheap'.

Make the occasional seat on tours and excursions available to your local travel editor, and those at newspapers where you pick up. Yes, you are expecting them to write something about your trip, but make sure they understand it's mainly about your company, not the destination. If nothing appears in print, don't get too flustered; the fact that you are 'owed one' is your lever to make the next bit of PR count with your new press contact.

Evaluation and reaction

If you have a structure that tells you how many enquiries you achieved per activity, what you did with each and how much business flowed, then you can translate it into a financial evaluation.

As a rule of thumb, the lemons are more obvious than the peaches. Fine; deciding never to re-use particular media is a key part of this activity. Some marketing techniques may have generated plenty of contacts but little actual turnover. These are harder to quantify. Will those contacts become customers, and when?

Where you can recognise a success story, don't just pat yourself on the back. Follow the old gold-miner's saying: when you hit pay-dirt, dig all the way through the mountain. This could mean focussing activity on a target group or it could mean concentrating on a type of media or publication.

This approach makes some people nervous. They want to spread themselves thinly, because they fear losing out if they don't. That's the best way to waste money. Look at what the big boys do. Some only advertise on TV, others just in the press. This isn't a budgetary consideration; they're spending millions so they could legitimately do both. But experience has shown what works, and they won't be deflected.

I suggest that evaluating marketing spend isn't difficult for those with a small budget, but unless you set up the system that enables you to do it reasonably scientifically, it's impossible. Perhaps more important, if you don't implement a sales response system to deal with enquiries, you might as well not have bothered in the first place.

For most operators, putting marketing activity together is enjoyable. You will have noticed that most of the points I make involve administrative graft - rather boring stuff. Unfortunately, there's no substitute for this if you want to squeeze every last drop out of your spend. An hour's planning is worth a day's battle.

Paul Clapham is a marketing consultant with over 25 years experience, working with a wide range of businesses, on an even wider range of projects, both in the UK and overseas. He has run his own consultancy for the past nine years.

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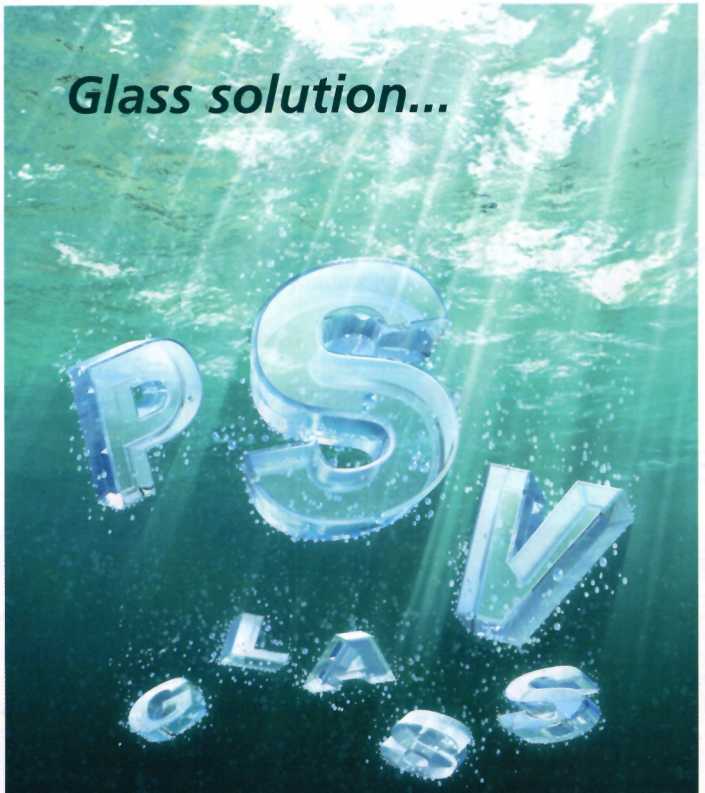

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Send your questions to *cbwinbox@rouncymedia.co.uk*, fax 0845 2802927 or write to: Q+A, CBW, 3 The Office Village, Cygnet Park, Hampton, Peterborough PE7 8FD

If you've got a question and don't know who to ask, our panel of experts can help. We've recruited the best brains in the business to solve your problems, from legal technicalities to cleaning products and the latest legislation to the most eye-catching liveries for your fleet. Send your questions to the address above and we'll set our experts to work

CBW's technical and minibus editor Martin Cole has years of experience in the market

Want to know the rules for driving in Ireland? CBW's Gabriel Conway's your man

Andrew Woolfall of transport specialists Backhouse Jones will tackle your legal queries

Stephen Rogers has coach tourism taped. He runs European Marketing in Bristol

Dominant mail

Q I ran 30 tour departures with my tour coach last year fairly successfully, but I now want to build the loadings. I produce a little brochure, and send it to a mailing list comprised of customers and inquiries built up locally when I've shown off the vehicle. But I need more potential customers. Is there a cheap/quick/easy way to grow my mailing list?

A **Try to avoid purchasing a list from a broker, especially if you are operating in a clearly defined and local market. Mailing lists are notoriously difficult to keep up to date and if you consider that almost 15% of the population either dies or moves house each year, you start to get some idea. For a "quick hit" in your local area, you should consider a one off door to door mailing exercise. There are commercial agencies which specialise in this but try to avoid local free newspapers. They are cheaper but distribution is not so widespread and your message tends to become lost with all the other leaflets delivered at the same time. With rates around £45 per 1000 leaflets, the Royal Mail Household Delivery Service might appear the most expensive option but it guarantees your leaflet is distributed to every house in the specified area along with the morning post. You can also select your area right down to the individual post code sector and there is also assistance available in targeting the post codes where your own client profile is more likely to live.**

A strong message likely to generate a response is necessary but with a clear, simple leaflet and a well defined distribution area you have the means to generate a relevant and active mailing list at a realistic price. SR

Seeing stars

Q Last autumn, I ran a tour which used a four-star French hotel. I have now had a claim that the hotel is only three-star grade because it didn't offer full room service. I am saying the French star rating is not the same as in England, but I don't want to go to court to find out I am wrong. What do you think?

A **The Package Travel Directive clearly requires you to include in your promotional material the applicable national rating of the hotels used. Star ratings do indeed differ across Europe but you have done precisely what is required of you to comply with consumer law. Sounds like a really nice customer to me. Somehow I don't think you will see him in court. SR**

Cash conundrum

Q I suspect one of my drivers is not accounting for all the cash paid for optional excursions, but I don't want to go to a system where everything has to be forward-booked. What's the best system - cheque only, or am I missing something?

A **Why not upset all your drivers and include all excursions in the tour price in future? I would be interested to meet the tour operator whose cash accounting on optional excursions was 100% accurate and "wastage free." Personally, I think clients are far more clued up these days and understand the costs involved better than say 20 years ago. If you are selling cheap holidays in the hope of making up revenue through optional excursions, this is a dangerous route to follow these days - there is a danger of attracting customers who can only just afford the holiday. It also plays into your competitors' hands, especially if they include their excursions. They might be more expensive than you but the cost of your optionals is exactly what they use to justify their prices. Time to break with tradition and re-think your costing practices perhaps? SR**

Inspection worry

Q I have just had the VOSA vehicle examiner round, and he spent a great deal of time on a vehicle which was clearly marked 'Not to be moved' as it required some work on the brakes. I talked to him to explain this but I am now worried that anything he found will go on my record. If it comes up, will the traffic commissioner accept my version of events or his?

A **In normal circumstances a VOSA vehicle examiner has the power to examine any vehicle that is likely to be used under the operators licence, particularly if it is displaying a vehicle disc. It is however an established practice that an examiner will not inspect a vehicle which is displaying a 'VOR' – Vehicle Off Road notice in the windscreen. We would argue that he should treat a vehicle marked 'Not to be moved' in the same way. If a prohibition has been imposed it should be appealed or at the very least a letter of protest sent to your local office and copied to the traffic commissioner.**

If the matter were to be raised at a public inquiry your version of events will be considered by the traffic commissioner and he will decide who is to be believed. The determining factor is likely to be whether the vehicle examiner found other defective items in addition to the defective brakes. AW

Tender trouble

Q I have bid for a tender and successfully won three schools contracts. The only problem ›

MINIBUS MONTHLY

Every month CBW publishes a 16-page Minibus supplement. This all new monthly publication includes all the minibus and accessibility news along with dedicated articles and products for this specialised industry.

- Welfare vehicles
- Accessibility products
- Road tests
- Minibuses for sale

PLUS much more

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity to promote your product, service or vehicles in this supplement then contact:

Kirsty Flatt
01733 293246

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!

is that I have only two vehicles! I had expected to win one or possibly two, and now the council is telling me I have to run all three as I was the only bidder and there is only a fortnight to go before start of term. In the medium term, can I hire in another operator for the contract until I can find another vehicle and driver?

A **The answer to this question depends entirely upon the terms and conditions identified in the tender document. If the tender document allows you to sub-contract the operation of the contract, then providing you satisfy the terms of that sub-contracting clause (sub-contracting arrangements usually require the consent of the local authority) you will have no problem sub-contracting.**

However, if the tender document does not allow sub-contracting arrangements to be put in place, then you will need to start negotiating sharply with the local authority to enable that to occur in the short term, and it will be almost certain that such an agreement needs to be put in writing. You will then need to apply to the traffic commissioner to increase your authorisation to allow you to run another vehicle. AW

Unfair rivalry

Q I have a competitor not far from my home town who is undercutting every tour I run. I suspect that his 'bonding' arrangement - which he declares in his leaflets is done with trustee accounts - is not really happening and I'm wondering who I can tell? Do I have to wait until he goes belly up, or can I get someone to investigate what he's up to?

A **Compliance with the Package Travel Regulations is unfortunately in the hands of local Trading Standards Offices, each of which has different priorities but all seemingly without the necessary resources to devote to this very important aspect of consumer protection. TSO's can only respond to complaints from members of the public and not businesses although if you ever have evidence your competitor is trading fraudulently then you should bring this to the attention of authorities including the police. Lack of bonding is probably not the only explanation for your competitor undercutting you, assuming it is not simply that he is a better negotiator. If you are bonded through a recognised association like BCH, perhaps you should concentrate your marketing more on what this actually means – especially in the light of the recent announcements from ABTA. I think there is considerable scope for majoring on financial security at the moment and BCH are missing a golden opportunity if they do not react to ABTA's perceived withdrawal. Why not see if they will support some local advertising for you? SR**

Digital dilemma

Q It looks like I can't avoid getting a vehicle with a digital tachograph this year. When it arrives, I will then have issued my drivers with cards, and installed all the operations equipment with the eventual object of converting the entire fleet - I run only six - to digital. But I will in the meantime have a mixture of digital and paper driving records for more than one driver. Will VOSA accept my own system of making them tally?

A **The introduction of digital tachographs will not change any of the obligations placed upon operators with regards to the monitoring of drivers hours and ensuring that offences are not committed. Both the traffic commissioners and the courts will want to see proper systems in place to ensure that records of work can be produced and that work can be checked to ensure compliance with the driving and rest limits.**

If VOSA come to inspect your records they will want to see a system that shows what work each driver has done for each day and then a record of that work from either a traditional tachograph chart or the data from the digital tachograph. One of the most common problems that is likely to occur is operators not having, or being able to produce the digital data. Operators should therefore ensure that 'back up' copies of the data are made, whether electronically or by print-outs. Care should be taken to recover information as quickly as possible from agency or part time drivers as this may soon become lost.

As long as you can account for all your drivers' work and vehicle movements and show you have systems to capture the information, monitor work and take appropriate action when required, VOSA should be happy with your systems. AW

I've ad enough

Q Our local paper runs reader offer holidays which use long pick-up runs to get to the ferryport. Having made a 'Billy call' and found out the itinerary for a competing tour, I devised an advert which explains that we get to Dover three hours faster. But the local paper is now refusing to run the advert. Is that legal?

A **Newspapers are not obliged to accept your adverts but it is sad to see that this old chestnut is still alive. A decade ago it seemed every regional newspaper wanted to become a travel agent and specialist 'reader offer' tour operators were springing up behind every bush. As with every new idea, you can have too much of it, supply outstripped demand and a couple of high profile company failures left some editors with questions to answer from readers who had lost money.**

Newspapers do not have to accept your adverts, they normally have to give you a reason; like it is obscene or potentially defamatory. If it is purely to restrict your right to trade then that is another matter. The reality is that common sense usually prevails. Newspapers rely on advertising revenue far more than commission from holiday sales and whoever is refusing your advert usually has somebody in higher authority who subscribes to this mantra.

It may also be a good time to review your advertising spend with that particular newspaper. SR

DIGITACHS
Are you fully prepared for the digital tachograph revolution? If you're unsure about what you need to do, don't just ignore it and hope it will go away, write to our experts and they'll ease your worries.

FLEET
Want to upgrade your vehicles, but aren't sure which model will best suit your needs? Write to Q+A and we'll suggest the best make and model for you.

Never too cold to run the air-con

Find out whether your coaches' system works... before your customers do

It may be cold outside, but there are two good reasons why, this week, you should get the air conditioning running on all your coaches.

The first is that you don't want to find out on the first sunny, spring day while carrying 50 passengers, that it's broken. If they've booked air conditioning, they'll want it and it's quite possible the tour organiser or passengers will want some compensation.

The second reason is that, if you find out on that first warm day, you'll be facing not one day without it, but a week or two; the specialists say that the way servicing work just floods in on that day is a revelation. Nobody watches the weather forecast more keenly than an air conditioning centre.

Doing a quick check is only a question of starting the coach and switching on to the highest setting then waiting for the system to kick in. You can visually check the belt condition, and if you switch on during tick-over, as the compressor starts you can sometimes hear the engine note drop a little.

But there's nothing to beat a proper service by a qualified dealership. Contact the advertisers on this page and get your vehicles booked in now, before the rush starts...

Need parts for your air con? Call Heavy Duty

Now in its third season, Heavy Duty Parts has placed itself nicely into the air conditioning market, applying the same philosophy to A/C parts as it does to other markets – original equipment parts without dealer prices.

Specialising in Sutrak & Webasto systems, Heavy Duty are also able to supply parts for Konvecta and Hispacold.

Because HDP imports the parts directly from the OE manufacturer, it is invariably extremely competitive on the parts needed most, such as Spal, Aurora and Bosch blower motors, magnetic clutches, Bock compressors, pollen filters and most components that make up A/C systems.

Heavy Duty also supplies fully automatic diagnostic equipment, which is capable of testing complete A/C systems, prices start at £2695rrp.

In mainland Europe, 99% of operators already test and maintain their own systems as it is more financially viable.

It's only because of the fear factor in the UK that this doesn't happen now. Operators could make substantial savings on A/C maintenance bills by simply testing systems, even if they are not yet confident of correcting what's wrong.

Heavy Duty offers a free of charge next day delivery service on all orders above £100 (UK mainland only).

■ Heavy Duty Parts can be contacted on 01427 881109 or visit *www.heavydutyparts.co.uk*

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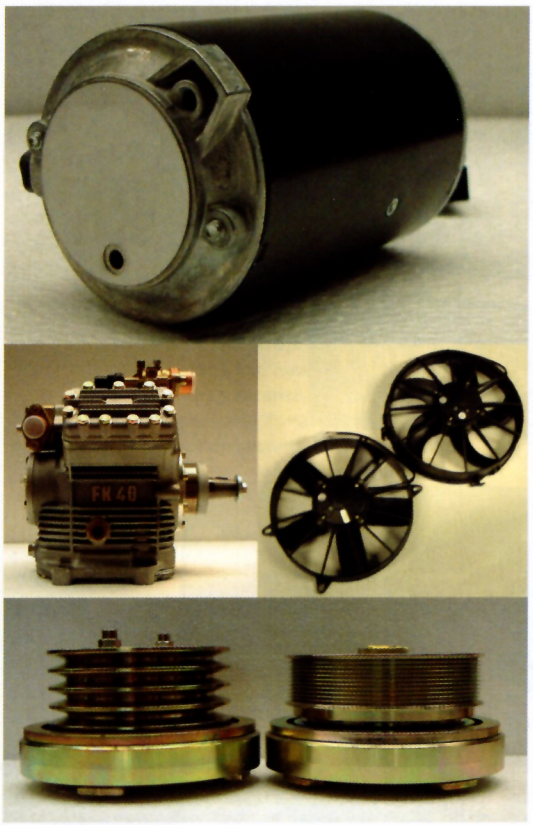

Heavy Duty Parts has a wide range of parts for your air conditioning system

Carrier's new technology

Carrier says it has solved the servicing issues posed by direct-drive compressors with an electrically-driven roof-top unit.

Carrier AvantAC Electric replaces the engine-mounted compressor with an AC generator, which then powers a sealed cooling module within the unit. With no piping going round the vehicle and packaged design, the AvantAC Electric unit reduces refrigerant leakage by 80% over the lifetime of the unit.

Using Alternating Current, says Carrier, has allowed it to incorporate much longer-lasting components, items such as the blower motors lasting six times as long.

The roof-top unit has been designed to match a range of different roof curves, but the AC version can be directly exchanged for the conventional Classic unit in many vehicles.

One of the fringe benefits of running on a continuous current is that the effectivness of the new system is not dependent on engine speed, and so the saloon can be maintained at a constant temperature.

■ Carrier in the UK can be contacted by manufacturers on 0870-600-1133, while operators can find out more through their local agents.

Carrier AvantAC Electric

Climate Control
from Eberspächer

Passenger expectations increase annually and now most consider a comfortable environment as essential as a comfortable seat, especially those with special needs.

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VINTAGE COACH AND BUS WEBSITE IS A HIT WITH HIRERS

When Peter Rigarlsford launched *www.vintagecoach.com* in February 2000, it was to market a 1950 Austin CXB coach as a niche vehicle for weddings and special occasions. But from the start, there were plenty of enquiries for London double-deckers, but little if anything for a 27-seat vintage coach.

Almost immediately, he started taking bookings on behalf of other companies sub-contracting the jobs and making a margin on the hire. One company booked over £25k of work with vintagecoach.com in the two years up to the end of 2003.

A move from Essex to Lincolnshire in 2001 left the Austin coach relegated to a 'hobby' says Mr Rigarlsford. In 2003 it became clear that the local council wasn't going to allow planning permission for a garage to keep the coach , so reluctantly it was sold to a Belgian classic coach hire company.

The vintagecoach.com website was still attracting a good level of enquiries. A number of operators didn't want to sub-contract so, at the end of 2003 the website was converted to a directory format, where operators pay to be on the site and have direct links to their own web sites, along with their own e-mail and other contact details. The site currently receives around 1,000 hits per month.

It costs £49.99 to be on the site for a year, which includes a page listing the companies' details, together with photos, etc, if required. The domains *www.busforhire.com*, *www.redlondonbus.com* and *www.londonbushire.com* along with variations of the names, now link to the *www.vintagecoach.com* site.

"Although most people contact operators direct, there are some telephone and e-mail enquiries that come through to me and these are forwarded to relevant companies although most are requests for vehicles in areas where there isn't currently any operator listed, or for the impossible," says Mr Rigarlsford. "I have even been asked if I know of anyone with a 'very old, preferably Victorian, mini-bus.'"

"Routemasters seem to be very much in demand for all sorts of occasions, which is no doubt due to the publicity surrounding their withdrawal from regular service in London. A 'red London Bus' would seem to be the 'must have' accessory this year."

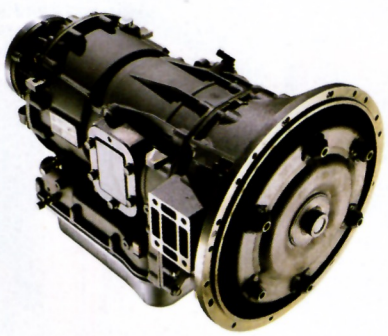
Wedding bookings are very popular, not least with Peter Rigarlsford and his wife Sarah, who hired an ex-London Buses Leyland Titan for their wedding in September 2003: "It reflected the high proportion of London bus drivers among the guests, including my father who drove at Hornchurch Garage for 30 years," said Mr Rigarlsford

"Operators do a good job of hiding their assets away from view. People don't only hire vehicles where they live, so local knowledge can't be relied upon," he says.

"When you consider the number of enquiries I receive from Londoners looking for Routemasters in London, you might imagine that they would know who to contact. But that seems not to be the case in an age where the internet is the first place to search for almost anything. At under £1 per week to be on vintagecoach.com, it doesn't need to do much to pay for itself."

■ *www.vintagecoach.com*
info@vintagecoach.com

Peter and Sarah Rigarlsford hired this Leyland Titan for their wedding



ALLISON TO REVEAL LARGE ORDER AT CV SHOW

The forthcoming 2006 CV Show will see Allison Transmission announce a major order for its transmission systems and the details of a demanding, like-for-like, cost comparison between a manual and automatic tipper truck operating in a UK urban environment. The tests are being carried out to obtain real road data and this is being collected to accurately assess whole life costs and performance. Visitors will be able to examine and assess the duty cycle on the stand.

"Operators are already convinced about the safety, performance and reliability aspects of the Allison transmission," said Allison's UK area manager Riccardo Sardelli. "However, many distribution and construction fleets have never considered a powershifting automatic transmission. We want to present them with real world data for efficiency, economy and whole life costs. This is a long term project and we expect to present the first results later in 2006, with further analysis available over the coming years."

Allison's will also announce a significant boost for its bus Torqmatic Series transmissions. The order is for over 1600 transmissions and the company believes it reaffirms the acceptance of fully automatic transmissions globally, and Allison's strength through product design and after sales support.

Stand exhibits will include 2000 and 3000 Series products. Currently, the 2100 is popular in small buses like the Plaxton Primo, with the 2500 available for smaller commercial vehicle applications. Both Series will feature Allison 4th Generation Controls, offering the option for developing features for OEM and bodybuilder alike.

■ *www.allisontransmission.com*

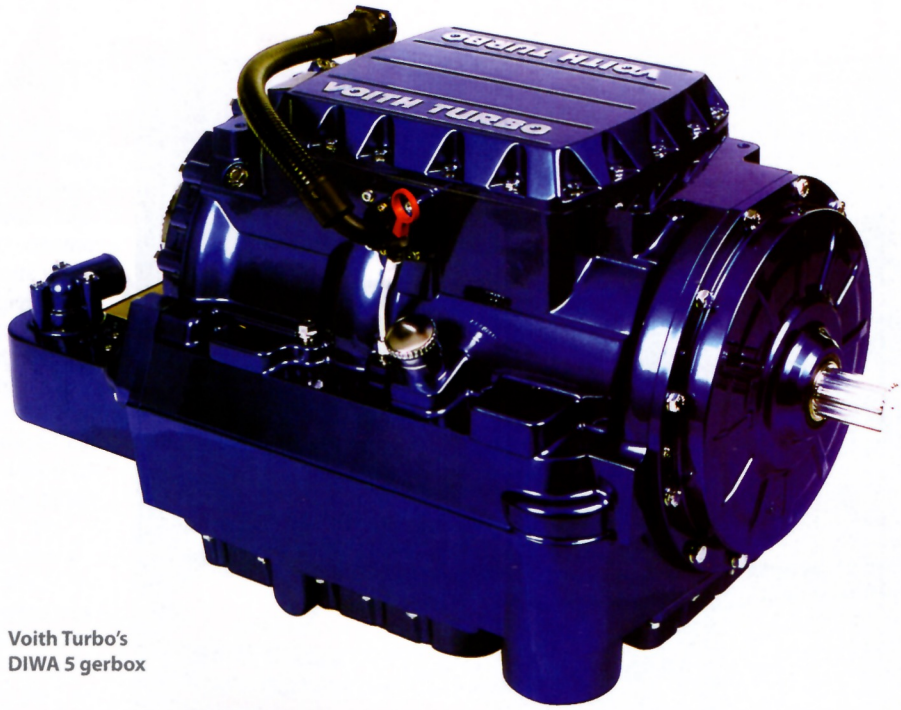
REMOTE INSPECTION PLANNED FOR US HEAVY VEHICLES

Brake problems on coaches and buses could be spotted and fixed sooner with a radio frequency identification data (RFID) inspection system being developed by Zonar Systems and Spectra Inc.

Zonar Systems is teaming up with Spectra of Toronto to co-develop an RFID-enabled brake diagnostics system. Based on Spectra's proven brake sensor technology, the new product leverages the company's extensive experience with heavy-duty brakes and Zonar's patented RFID verified visual inspection system. Both companies said the system would be low cost, easily utilised and highly effective.

Spectra chairman Andrew J. Malion said: "We are thrilled to be a part of what will be a quantum leap forward in how big trucks and buses are inspected and maintained. I predict that electronic vehicle inspection will be welcomed with open arms by commercial operators because it will impact safety and revenues dramatically."

■ ***www.zonarsystems.com***
or *www.spectra-ssa.com*



Voith Turbo's DIWA 5 gerbox

VOITH TURBO AIDS OLYMPIC TRANSPORT RELIABILITY

With the recently held Winter Olympics safely out of the way, Voith Turbo has revealed its part in assisting the local transport operator to ensure its buses operated trouble-free during the event.

Turin Transport Authority, Torinese Trasporti (GTT) entered into special preparations with the transmission specialist to ensure its buses were available at all times. Voith Turbo was able to examine all the saved operating data contained in the transmission control system in each of the GTT fleet's DIWA automatic gearboxes – which number more than 500. Analysing the differentiations allowed the manufacturer to identify any vehicles potentially in line for a driveline service and to schedule preventative check ups. They also singled out all DIWA units due for a general overhaul within three months of the start of the Winter Olympics and brought the servicing forward.

Further precautionary measures were taken with an agreement that exchange replacement transmissions for the GTT fleet would be on stand-by at the Voith production facility in Garching, Germany and at its subsidiary Voith Turbo Italia.

As a result of pre-planning and advancing maintenance checks and servicing, GTT suffered no faults with vehicle drivelines throughout the whole of the Winter Games.

■ *www.voithturbo.com*

Imex transport manager, Craig Carter

IMEX LAUNCHES SAME-DAY SERVICE FOR SOUTHWEST

Automotive parts supplier Imex has extended its same-day delivery service to cover the Southwest region around Bristol and parts of Gloucester and Bath.

Imex already has same-day delivery services operating in the Midlands, North of England and central Scotland with guaranteed next-day delivery to customers outside these regions. The service around Nottingham and Derby was recently increased to twice a day.

Based in Castleford, Imex celebrates its 20th anniversary this year and has additional depots at Glasgow, Warrington and Birmingham. It supplies replacement parts for MAN, an 'all makes' engine range, Volkswagen commercial parts, bumpers for a range of panel vans and Siphex anti-theft devices for fuel tanks.

MD Arthur Pinkney said: "We have always maintained our customers are the driving force behind our business. We hope by providing customers with an exceptional service we can, in some way, help repay them for their years of loyal support."

The company will be exhibiting at the CV Show next month.

■ ***www.imexpart.com***
Call 0845 6050 404

Deliveries

Have you taken delivery of a new vehicle and want to tell the world about it? Email all the details and pictures to *jack.thorpe@rouncymedia.co.uk* or write to the address on page 3

PRENTICE WESTWOOD

Last year's acquisition of a Volvo B12B - after 20 years of buying other marques - has been enough to convince Prentice Westwood to buy another.

The new one's another Berkhof Axial 12-metre sporting the same I-Shift gearchange coupled with the 420bhp DH12D engine that endeared the first to MD Robbie Prentice: "It makes such a difference," he said. "The reports we had heard from fellow operators on the I-Shift have now been endorsed by our own experiences

"We are delighted with the performance and had no hesitation in going back for another."

The latest has a 49/53-seat configuration with centre toilet, air con, fridge, drinks maker, TV and DVD, satellite navigation and alloy wheels.

Prentice Westwood, based in West Calder in Central Scotland, runs 55 vehicles, with the bulk of its work its own local tours and prestige tour operator contracts. It also provides airport transfers and schools contracts.

FACT FILE

Chassis/Body Volvo B12B/ Berkhof Axial
Engine Volvo DH12D 420bhp
Transmission I-Shift automatic
Seats 49/53
Spec Toilet, air con, TV/DVD, fridge, hot drinks, alloy wheels
Supplied by Volvo Bus 01926 414518

LEONS COACH TRAVEL

This imposing Bova Magiq supplied to Leons Coach Travel has all the 'bells and whistles' you'd expect of a luxury tourer.

The 12.2-metre coach is ready for any weather with special winter-protected air conditioning and a Webasto digitally-controlled pre-heater. The driver can be confident in ASR traction control, anti-lock braking, central locking for the luggage doors and a reversing camera.

On-board comforts for the passengers include reclining seats with leather headrest inserts and leather piping, plus footrests. A water boiler and fridge are both installed, and they can enjoy DVD via two overhead monitors. Leons has specified the ZF 5HP602 automatic gearbox with manual retarder control.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body Bova Magiq HD122-340XE integral 12.2 metre
Engine DAF 1266, 340bhp
Transmission ZF automatic
Seats 49
Spec Air con, digital Webasto, DVD, reversing camera
Supplied by Moseley PCV 01977 609000

UNI-LINK

The University of Southampton's Uni-Link fleet continues expanding with two more buses - both run on a free shuttle service.

The East Lancs Myllennium Darts are running a 10-minute frequency connecting the Central Station and West Quay shops with the town's quays and Isle of Wight and Hythe ferry services.

Funded by a consortium of Southampton City Council, South West Trains, the West Quay shopping complex and Red Funnel Ferries, the service runs seven days of the week, all day.

The 10.5-metre buses are built on ADL's Dart SLF chassis with four-cylinder, 3.9-litre Cummins engines. The bodywork from East Lancashire Coachbuilders is the B29D configuration.

FACT FILE

Chassis/body ADL Dart SLF/ East Lancs Myllennium B29D
Engine Cummins iSBE 3.9-litre
Seats 29 + 15
Supplied by East Lancashire Coachbuilders 01254 504150

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Email your copy to cbb@rouncymedia.co.uk
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Linage Ad

Mercedes-Benz 609 1994 with turbo. 24 seater, three point belts, no boot. Contract maintained. Tested until August 2006. **£5,500** + VAT. 01234 567890. Peterborough

Only **£20** min 20 words*

* 50p per word thereafter

Mercedes-Benz 609 1994 with turbo. 24 seater, three point belts, no boot. Contract maintained. Tested until August 2006. **£5,500** + VAT. 01234 567890. Peterborough

(with tint)

Only **£25** min 20 words*

For Recruitment and Tenders call Gary on **01733 293247**
Recruitment and Tenders deadline 12pm Monday

For Products and Services call James on **01733 293249**
Products and Services deadline 5pm Friday

For Vehicle Sales call Beth on **01733 293480**
Vehicle Sales deadline 3 pm Monday

All prices subject to VAT

TESTIMONIALS

"We sold our minibus to the first person who rang, we had a good response overall and were pleased with the way things went."

Paul and Carol Tallents

"Thank you very much for the ad of our coach. We managed to sell it in the first week of advertising. We shall use CBW again."

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1995/1996/1997 DENNIS JAVELIN'S

41-47 seats, Wadham Stringer Mark 3, MoT'd Feb 06, heater system, all in superb condition. Must see. Choice of 6

£POA

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Ex MoD, 45/47 high back moquette seats with three point belts, only 70,000k from new, MoT March 2007.

CHOICE OF TWO £POA

1994 BLUEBIRD SCHOOL BUSES

71 PASSENGER BUSES

RHD, 51 seats plus 20 standees, Cummins eng. auto transmission, excellent cond. 1 owner, full new test. Offers invited.

Choice of two.
Very good value
Part ex-considered

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28 seats,
rear wheel chair lift,
PSV tested. Full MoT

£4,950 + VAT

SALE

1993 MERCEDES PLAXTON BEAVER

24 seats,

MoT

Bargain to clear

£POA

1996 MERCEDES BENZ 709

26 Seats, full MoT if required, diesel bus, quick sale.

£4,000

DENNIS JAVELIN 1993 10 METRE

47 high back seats, air conditioned, sold with 14 months MoT

£19,950

2003 (June) B.M.C. 12 metre Airport Bus, Model SLF 220

32 seats, 27 standees, (with wheelchair facilities) rigid large luggage pens, automatic box, Cummins 220 engine, full PSV test to July '06. COIF. Very nice condition inside & out. In white

Must be seen Cost £92,000
Our price £47,500 +VAT

Dennis Javelin MK II Wadham Stringer

SPECIAL NEEDS VEHICLE

8.5 metre, with Ricon wheel chair lift, 36 high back seats with 3 point belts, or 22 seats + 3 wheelchairs or 16 seats + 6 wheel chairs. Cummins 8.3 litre engine, 6 speed gearbox, air suspension, ABS heater, very low mileage, full service history, PSV/MoT Sept '06.

£POA

1993 TOYOTA OPTIMO

21 high back seats,

table, MoT to 2007

£8,500 + VAT

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1994/7 N/R REG MCW METRORIDER ,
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1994 L REG DENNIS DART,
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1997 P REG VOLVO OLYMPIANS,
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TENDER NOTICES

Public Transport

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

North Lincolnshire Borough Council invites tenders from public transport operators for bus services operating within North Lincolnshire and to other destinations.

Operators who have already expressed interest in bidding to provide public transport services will receive these documents automatically and do not need to respond to this advertisement.

Deadline for submission of tenders: 12.00 Noon, Tuesday, 2 May 2006
Start date of contracts: From Saturday 2 September 2006
Duration of contracts: 5 years

Contact Ian Thompson. Tel: 01724.297460 or E-Mail: Ian.Thompson@northlincs.gov.uk
For more information visit link below

Education Transport Services

North Lincolnshire Borough Council invites tenders from suitably qualified transport operators for the provision of School bus services for transporting between 9 and 77 children from home to school or other units. The services will be required to operate mainly within the boundaries of North Lincolnshire.

Applications must be submitted in writing for the 'Invitation to Tender' documents.

Deadline for submission of tenders: 12.00Noon, Tuesday 2 May 2006
Start date of contracts: From Tuesday 5 September 2006
Duration of contracts: 1 to 5 years

Contact Heather Barratt. Tel: 01724.297813 or E-Mail: Heather.Barratt@northlincs.gov.uk
For more information visit link below.
For further information on each of the tenders included, visit: www.northlincs.gov.uk/procurement

NOTICE OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT TRAVEL CONCESSION SCHEMES 2006

The New Scheme:

Notice is given under Section 95 of the Transport Act 1985 that Corby Borough Council, Daventry District Council, Kettering Borough Council, Northampton Borough Council, South Northamptonshire Council, Wellingborough Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council acting jointly will introduce amended reimbursement arrangements for travel concessions in Northamptonshire, and between Northamptonshire and certain defined places outside Northamptonshire, to be known as the 'Northamptonshire Joint Travel Concession Scheme 2006' and the 'Northamptonshire Joint Travel Concession Scheme (No.2) 2006, from 1st April 2006.

These amended arrangements will replace the following existing arrangements:

- Corby Borough Council Concessionary Travel Scheme;
- Kettering Borough Council Concessionary Travel Scheme;
- Northampton Borough Council Concessionary Travel Scheme 26 October 1986 as amended on 28 May 2001 and 1 April 2003;
- South Northamptonshire Council and Daventry District Council Joint Travel Concession Scheme 1 December 2002 as amended on 1 April 2005; and
- Wellingborough Borough Council Concessionary Travel Scheme.

The New Reimbursement Arrangements:

The new reimbursement arrangements are described in full in the documents 'Northamptonshire Joint Travel Concession Scheme 2006' and 'Northamptonshire Joint Travel Concession Scheme (No.2) 2006' as required by Section 95 of the Transport Act 1985.

The Standard Scheme, and Scheme No.2, will provide primarily for free travel for eligible residents of the areas of the above Borough and District Councils within those areas (and to certain places outside) subject to certain time restrictions, while Alternative or Additional Token Schemes may also be available to certain of those residents. For the Standard Scheme the operators will be reimbursed on a monthly basis for participation using the formula:

$$0.736N_0\ F_0$$

where: N_0 is the number of 'free' concessionary travellers; & F_0 is the average equivalent on-bus adult single fare paid by persons without a permit (defined in £s).

For the Token Schemes reimbursement will be undertaken by National Transport Tokens Ltd. at the face value of the Tokens.

Scheme No.2 will also provide for travel at a flat fare of £1 for the eligible residents of the areas of the above Borough and District Councils within Northamptonshire (and to certain places outside the County). For the £1 flat fare scheme the operators will be reimbursed on a monthly basis for participation using the formula:

$$\{[(N_1/1.3)*F_1] - (N_1)\}$$

where: N_1 is the number of £1 concessionary travellers; & F_1 is the average on-bus adult single fare paid by persons without a permit (defined in £s).

The Schemes will be operative on all eligible services defined in the 'Travel Concessions (Eligible Services) Order 2002'.

Participating Operators and Services:

All operators of eligible services within the areas covered by the Schemes have a right to participate in the Schemes subject to certain conditions under Section 96 of the Transport Act 1985. Any such operators that wish to participate, and have not already been served with a 'Participation Notice', should contact Ian Coe as soon as possible at the address below.

Copies of the Details of the Schemes:

Details of the Schemes may be inspected at:

- Corby Borough Council (Deene House, New Post Office Square, Corby NN17 1GD)
- Daventry District Council (Lodge Road, Daventry NN11 5AF)
- Kettering Borough Council (Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering NN15 7QX)
- Northampton Borough Council (Cliftonville House, Bedford Road, Northampton NN4 7NR)
- South Northamptonshire Council (Springfields, Towcester NN12 6AE)
- Wellingborough Borough Council (Tithe Barn Road, Wellingborough NN8 1BN)

Copies of the details of the Schemes will be supplied to any person on request by post from Ian Coe at the address below.

Ian Coe, School & Community Transport Manager, Northamptonshire County Council, Sustainable Transport, Riverside House, Riverside Way, Bedford Road, Northampton NN1 5NX.

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Tyneside twitchers flock to bus stop

A Tyneside bus stop has been unusually busy recently, but it's not the popularity of the bus service that's behind it.

About 250 people flocked to the stop at to the Sherburn Towers Estate, near Rowlands Gill, because of a host of feathered visitors.

Up to 30 red kites are roosting close to the stop, so the Northern Kites project team set up telescopes overlooking the farmland where the birds have been spending the winter nights.

The birds, which were successfully re-introduced to the North East in 2004 after a 150 year absence, give spectacular evening aerial displays.

Most of the people who came along were from the local area, but the project team also welcomed visitors from Northumberland, Co Durham and North Yorkshire.

One man even brought his caravan so that he could stay overnight to watch them.

Pints make prizes

Nexus clearly had its sights set on attracting a new crowd, offering the ultimate giveaway for St Patrick's Day last Friday. Not only did the PTE get into the spirit of the occasion by offering live music at Metro stations in Sunderland and Newcastle, it was also offering vouchers for a pint of Guinness. What's more, when you redeemed your voucher for a pint of the black stuff, you got a voucher for free travel for the rest of the evening. Top marks to Nexus...

5 YEARS AGO **The Tillingbourne Bus Group, serving Hampshire, Sussex and Surrey, went into receivership after 75 years of operation. Rising fuel costs and inadequate subsidies were among the reasons given.**

10 YEARS AGO **The Department of Transport proposed a hotline giving details of a coach's Mot history and prohibitions record. Road safety minister Stephen Norris said the plan would deter 'cowboy operators'.**

50 YEARS AGO **Civil rights leader, the Reverend Martin Luther King, was convicted of organising an illegal boycott by black passengers of buses in the US state of Alabama.**

March 22 in history:

1888 The English Football League was established

1903 Niagara Falls ran out of water due to a drought

1904 The first colour photograph was published in the London Daily Illustrated Mirror

1948 Andrew Lloyd Webber, composer of musical hits such as Cats and Evita is born

2003 ITN reporter Terry Lloyd is killed in crossfire in Iraq

Googled...

www.transportcafe.co.uk

It's a bit off-beat, but here's a website for big eaters on lay-over. There are links to all manner of transport-related advice, from drivers' hours to drivers' dinners as well as a weather forecast, a feature about giving dogs chocolate, truck photos, a bit on the war in Iraq – it's a smorgasbord of titbits rather than a plain old greasy all-day breakfast. It's not the prettiest, but it's a feast of information.

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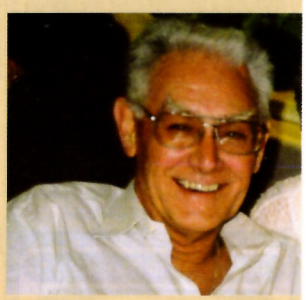
Two minute interview



Full name: Ray Pearson
Age: 66
Occupation: Retired, former editor of *CBW*

Is the PSV industry on its way up, down or static? I think that the industry is in a phase of regeneration, looking forward but still trying to hang on to past practices. Once it has sorted its act out it will surge forward, however I do not think it will be a quick or easy transition.

Which recent legislation has been most irritating or useless? I can't honestly say that any legislation has been totally useless, but digital tachographs and driving hours law have both been irritating.

Give the industry's business managers 20 words of helpful advice: Look for new ideas instead of fighting each other in trying to maintain old ones. Be adventurous. Be professional.

Who, in the last 50 years, has been most influential in the industry and why? There are many who have great influence on the industry but I would like to commend the army of coach drivers who have endured many hardships to provide passengers and holidaymakers with trouble-free and happy travel.

Which vehicle – coach, bus, motorcycle or car – do you love the most, and why? If I had to choose it would possibly be coaches, but having recently acquired a kit car it could just become my new love.

Who would play you in the film version of the story of your life? I would like to say Sean Connery, but, were he still alive it would be more likely to be Ronnie Barker!

Who would you have as your co-star? Jane Fonda (but don't tell the wife)...

H.W. Pickrell

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X REG PEUGEOT BOXER

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V REG MERCEDES SPRINTER 410D

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1999 T REG IVECO 49.10

TURBO DAILY, LONG WHEEL BASE, 5 SPEED , PAS, HIGH ROOF POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY WITH STEP,16 HIGH BACK SEATS,UNWIN TRACKING, RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 65,000 MILES,

Y REG TOYOTA HIACE

2.4 DIESEL,5 SPEED ,PAS, MEDIUM WHEEL BASE, LOW ROOF, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 3 SEATS 7 TWO WHEEL CHAIR POSITIONS,Q-SRAINT RESTRAINT SYSTEM, RICON FULLY AUTOMATIC TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER MINT CONDITION , 33,000 MILES

T REG 1999 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD

MANUAL,CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 15 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, SLIDING DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 48,000 MILES

Y REG 2001 VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

2.5TDI AUTOMATIC, POWERED STEERING, MWB, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 5 SEATS PLUS 1 WHEELCHAIR, UNWIN TRACKING, WITH SIDE MOUNTED RICON TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, MINT CONDITION, 33,000 MILES

X REG 2001 FORD TRANSIT 2.5 TD

MANUAL,CHASSIS DEVELOPMENT COACHBUILT BODY, PAS, 12 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, POWER DOOR FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, 63,000 MILES ONE REMAINING

2000 V REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DIESEL ,5 SPEED ,PAS, L W B, EXCEL CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 12 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, V GOOD CONDITION, ONE OWNER

T REG IVECO 59.12

2.8 DIESEL TURBO, MELLOR COACHBUILT BODY, P A S, 16 REMOVABLE SEMI HIGH BACK SEAT'S,UNWIN TRACKING, PLS FULLY AUTOMATIC TAIL LIFT, FRONT ENTRY,ONE OWNER, EX LOCAL AUTHORITY, LOW MILES 66,000 KMS

2001-04 REG RENAULT MASTER

MM33, 2.2 DCI, 5 SPEED, PAS, MWB, O & H CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 7 SEATS PLUS 2 WHEELCHAIR SPACES, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER. CHOICE OF FOUR

02 REG RENAULT MASTER

LM35, 2.DCI , 5 SPEED, PAS, LWB, EUROMOTIVE CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 12 SEATS, GLIDE RITE LOWERING SUSPENSION WITH FOLD OUT RAMP, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 55,000 MILES

V REG VOLKSWAGEN LT46

TURBO DIESEL, PAS, LWB, WHITACRES CONVERSION, LARGE POWER PLUG DOOR, HIGH ROOF, 16 REMOVABLE HIGH BACK SEATS, UNWIN TRACKING, RATCLIFFE UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER, COIF. CHOICE OF TWO

2003 03 REG RENAULT TRAFIC 100

1.9 DCI, 5 SPEED ,PAS, SHORT WHEEL BASE, O & H CONVERSION, SIDE LOADING DOOR, 8 SEATS PLUS DRIVER, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, ONE OWNER MINT CONDITION ,18,000 miles

51 REG IVECO 40.C13

2.9 TURBO DIESEL, PAS, IRIS CONVERSION 16 HIGH BACK SEATS. SLAM FRONT ENTRY DOOR, HIGH ROOF ,BONDED WINDOWS , M2 TESTED FLOOR, UNWIN TRACKING, HEATER, UNDERFLOOR RATCLIFF TAIL LIFT, LOW MILEAGE 43,000 KMS .

04+54 REG RENAULT MASTER T35

2.5, 5 SPEED,PAS, LWB, MELLOR CONVERSION, SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, 14 SEATS OR 10 PLUS 2 WHEEL CHAIRS, UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, MINT CONDITION, LOW MILEAGE. CHOICE OF FOUR

02 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP, PAS, LUXURY SPEC FRANK GUY CONVERSION, TWIN SLD'S, TINTED WINDOWS, 10 HIGH BACK SEATS,OVER HEAD LOCKERS, WITH AIR & LAMPS REAR STORAGE AREA, EBERSPACHER CLIMATE CONTROL, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

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NEW 06 REG, IVECO 40.C13

2.9 TURBO DIESEL IRIS CONVERSION 14 HIGH BACK COGENT SEATS. DOUBLE FRONT PASSENGER SEAT, SIDE-LOADING DOOR WITH AVS STEP, HIGH ROOF, M2 FLOOR, LOTS OF SPACE, DELIVERY MILEAGE ONLY, IN STOCK

2002 52 REG FORD TRANSIT 350

LONG WHEEL BASE, TURBO DIESEL, AUTOMATIC, PAS, HIGH ROOF SIDE ENTRY DOOR WITH STEP,12 HIGH BACK SEATS ,UNWIN TRACKING FOR 2 W/ CHAIRS RATCLIFF UNDERFLOOR TAIL LIFT,ONE OWNER, VERY LOW MILES 5500 MILES

NEW UN REGISTERED VOLKSWAGEN LT46

TURBO DIESEL, VDL KUSTER CONVERSION, 16 SEATS. LARGE POWER PLUG DOOR, HIGH ROOF, BONDED WINDOWS , LOW M2 FLOOR, M2 HIGH BACK SEATS 3 WHEEL CHAIR POSITIONS ,TRACKING, HEATER, LOWERED FLOOR WITH FOLD OUT SIDE RAMP

51 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT28

2.5 TURBO DIESEL, PAS, SHORT WHEEL BASE, LOW ROOF, TWIN SIDE LOADING DOORS WITH STEP,8 PASSENGER HIGH BACK SEATS WITH HEADREST, RICON TAIL LIFT, UNWIN TRACKING, MINT CONDITION ONE OWNER, 36,000 MILES. IDEAL TAXIS

W REG IVECO TURBO DAILY CREWCAB

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04 REG, VOLKSWAGEN LT35

MWB, 2.5 TURBO DIESEL 109 BHP,PAS, ADVACED CONVERSION, SLD, 8 HIGH BACK SEATS + DRIVER, REAR BULK HEAD FITTED WITH MICROWAVE AND HANDWASH REAR STORAGE AREA WITH HAND WASH AND TOOL STORAGE, EX DEMO 16,000 MILES

1999 T REG PEUGEOT BOXER

2.5 DIESEL ,5 SPEED ,PAS, L W B, EUROMOTIVE CONVERSION SIDE LOADING DOOR WITH STEP, 11 SEMI HIGH BACK SEATS , UNWIN TRACKING, RICON TAIL LIFT, 52,000 MILES. V GOOD CONDITION , ONE OWNER